MARVEL SPOTLIGHT™

Robert Kirkman Talks Marvel Zombies, Marvel Team-Up, Ultimate X-Men and much more!

ROBERT KIRKMAN

GREG LAND

Greg Land on Growing Up In Terre Haute, His Ever-Evolving Style, Ultimate FF, Phoenix and Those Marvel Zombies!

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DIRECT EDITION

$2.99 US $4.25 CAN

PLUGGING IN THE SPOTLIGHT

I'd like to give you a wonderful welcome to this month's issue of *Marvel Spotlight!* I'd like to...but I can't! Why? Well, here in the *Spotlight* office, we're in lockdown mode. We've got the doors and windows barricaded, we're hiding under the desks and behind the filing cabinets, and we are *totally* freaking out because the Marvel Zombies have come!

Here to talk us through this ill-timed intrusion of the undead is one ROBERT KIRKMAN, the writer who is taking both the indie comics and Marvel scenes by storm. This guy knows everything there is to know about zombies, from their blood-soaked heads to their rotted-off toes. After all, he's the guy who scripted the absolutely unbelievable *Marvel Zombies* comic, one of the surprise sleeper hits of the year!

But Kirkman is more than just a purveyor of flesh-eating horror comics. He's now the guy in charge of *Ultimate X-Men*, and just wait till you get a few hints about the direction he's taking on that title! Plus, there's extensive coverage of his cult hit *Marvel Team-Up*, as well as many of the other comics he's written for Marvel over the years (plus his upcoming *Ant-Man* series)!

Spotlight also catches up with GREG LAND, the guy who first drew these *Marvel Zombies* in the pages of *Ultimate Fantastic Four*, and thus is responsible for the undead Hawkeye scratching around outside our door (hey, I thought he was alive again)! We discuss all things zombie with Greg, including his love of old monster movies, plus what it takes for him to bring his unique style of art to the pages of *Ultimate FF* and *Phoenix: Endsong*. Plus, he gives a few hints about his next project, *Ultimate Power*, the event that will pit the Supreme Power and Ultimate universes against each other)!

With Greg and Robert around, us wimpy *Spotlight* staffers can feel a little more emboldened to come out of hiding. After all...they know zombies! Still, I'd encourage you to keep hold of that machete or tire iron you've got sitting close by while you read this issue of *Spotlight*. You might just need it!

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MARVEL SPOTLIGHT

ROBERT KIRKMAN • Official Handbook

REAL NAME: Robert Kirkman
DATE OF BIRTH: November 30, 1978
PLACE OF BIRTH: Lexington, Kentucky
PLACE OF RESIDENCE: Richmond, Kentucky
OCCUPATION: Comic book writer
WEBSITE: www.robertkirkman.com (Under Construction)
FIRST COMICS APPEARANCE: *Battle Pope #1*, 2000 (Funk-O-Tron)
FIRST MARVEL COMICS APPEARANCE: *Epic Anthology*, 2004

HISTORY: The general consensus on comics in the 1990s is that it was a down decade, when a speculator's mentality to collecting led to a boom/bust cycle and poor quality comics to boot. Hardy comics fans stuck it out, though, and right there with them was one Robert Kirkman, who was thirteen years old when X-Men #1 by Chris Claremont and Jim Lee became the biggest selling comic of all time in 1991. A fan of all things super-hero, Robert devoured tales of the Marvel Universe, enjoying not only the big guns of X-Men, Spider-Man and Fantastic Four, but the lesser-known series like Darkhawk and Sleepwalker. What can he say? The kid liked comics!

Eventually, Robert's love for comics led him to seek out a fortune in writing them. His first foray in comics writing was a title called Battle Pope, self-published through the Funk-O-Tron imprint he established with artist Tony Moore. The book was a highly irreverent stab at organized religion, with the Pope being cast as a martial-arts expert who is condemned by God to Hell. Not quite the kind of thing Robert brings up at the neighborhood barbeques in his Kentucky hometown, but it was a comic that was good enough to get him noticed. In fact, it was Image Comics that did the noticing, and though his first two projects with Image didn't sell all that well (SuperPatriot, Tech Jacket), it was the third one that did the charm.

Invincible premiered in 2003, designed to be a humble little super-hero book that tells the story of a teenager who's dad is the most powerful super-hero on planet Earth. In the years since its debut, Invincible has slowly built itself up to being one of the most popular creator-owned comic title on the market. When most of its peer titles have struggled to make it to ten issues, Invincible is up through forty books and adding readers every month! This is not a rare phenomenon in Robert's career, however: his end-of-the-world zombie book Walking Dead achieved similar feats, starting small and building itself up to huge popular and critical acclaim through excellent word of mouth.

With this kind of success, it would be impossible for Kirkman's talents to go unnoticed, and Marvel was all too willing to bring him into the fold. He started out with a variety of lower-profile projects like Jubilee and Marvel Knights 2099. Later, it became clear to Marvel that Robert's affection for their stable of heroes, as well as the healthy irreverence that marks his writing style, made him a great match for Marvel Team-Up, a fresh take on the team-up concept wherein Robert got handed the keys to the Marvel Universe! Through the whole series, Robert got to mix and match some of Marvel's biggest fixtures with some lesser known costumed heroes, and he also introduced a nice handful of strong new villains in his stories.

But it was Robert's take on the zombies introduced in Mark Millar and Greg Land's Ultimate Fantastic Four that has put his name on the map in a big way. The five-issue mini-series Marvel Zombies matched the slow-burning success of his Invincible and Walking Dead titles, a phenomenon rarely seen in modern comics sales cycles. Each issue sold more than the previous issue, and second, third and fourth printings of each issue would provide additional sell outs. The success of Marvel Zombies runs the risk of typecasting Robert Kirkman as "that zombie guy," but discriminating comics fans know better. The range of Kirkman's talents go beyond just writing about the walking dead; indeed, his ability to write towards scenes of both high action and deep characterization that showcase a range that makes him the perfect writer for Ultimate X-Men, which he is now settling into for a long run. With Marvel's confidence in Robert clear with this assignment, the future looks incredibly bright for him and his fans...the exact opposite kind of plot you could expect in his zombie comics!

THE ROBERT KIRKMAN MARVEL COMICS LIBRARY:

Captain America #29-32 (2004)
Epic Anthology #1 (2004)
Fantastic Four: Foes #1-6 (2005)
Jubilee #1-6 (2004)
Marvel Knights 2099: Black Panther (2004)
Marvel Knights 2099: Daredevil (2004)
Marvel Knights 2099: Inhuman (2004)
Marvel Knights 2099: Mutant 2099 (2004)
Marvel Knights 2099: Punisher (2004)
Marvel Spotlight: Robert Kirkman/Greg Land (2006)
Marvel Team-Up #1-up (2004-2006)
Marvel Zombies #1-5 (2006)
Spider-Man Unlimited #4 (2004)
Ultimate X-Men #66-up (2006)
What If? Thor Was A Herald of Galactus? (2006)
X-Men Unlimited #2 (2004)

COLLECT 'EM IN TRADE:

Avengers Disassembled: Captain America TPB
Fantastic Four: Foes TPB
Marvel Knights 2099 TPB
Marvel Team-Up Vol. 1: The Golden Child TPB
Marvel Team-Up Vol. 2: Master of the Ring TPB
Marvel Team-Up Vol. 3: League of Losers TPB
Marvel Zombies HC
What If? Mirror Mirror TPB

ULTIMATE PHOENIX: Robert really turns up the heat on the coming of the Phoenix, when he introduces Lilandra of the Shi'Ar into the lives of Jean Grey and Xavier! (From *Ultimate X-Men #67-69.*)

THE SPOTLIGHT INTERVIEW WITH ROBERT KIRKMAN

One thing you pick up from talking to Robert Kirkman is that he's a flat-out, unapologetic, uber-comics geek. He came up reading comics in the boom/bust 90s, so you know he's got an inordinate love for the artform. When others were fleeing comics in droves during that decade, Robert was buying up issues of *Darkhawk, Sleepwalker* and *NFL Superpro* and loving it. Now, only a short time later, he's crafting world-class, award-winning comics like *Invincible* and *Walking Dead,* and will soon be scribing no less than three comics at once for Marvel (*Ultimate X-Men, Ant-Man,* and another *Marvel Zombies* project!) Spotlight stole a little time from Robert during his fatherly duties of changing diapers and feeding bottles, and while he chowed down on a Double-Cheeseburger from the Burger Mart, we discussed all his current and upcoming projects, his dad's special relationship with sheet metal, and the mysteries of Reginald Vel Johnson, aka Carl Winslow from TV's *Family Matters*...among many other things! First up for discussion: the X-Men that are the Ultimate!

SPOTLIGHT: *Ultimate X-Men* is your newest current project for Marvel to date. I'm curious about you showing up as a writer on a comic like this one. Upon your arrival, we see a ton of new plotlines start up, twists to old plotlines that have been going on, added characterizations, but how much of this stuff is borne out of what you want to do, and how much is simply picking up where previous creators left off and just sort of following what they did? How free are you to chart the progress of the Ultimate X-Universe.

ROBERT: One thing I like to do with my books, both with *Invincible, Walking Dead* and all my other books, when I start a new arc,I always have plans for what I want to do with the book. I always know where I want to go. But I sit there for a minute and I go, "You know, if I was a new writer that was hired on at this point, and I had just read everything that had ever been done on this book, where would I take it? What would I do?" And I try to allot for new directions and new things that I could do that I wasn't planning. A lot of times on *Walking Dead*, I'll just go off on a tangent and eventually get back to where I was gonna go. I just look at it from that perspective.

So when I got *Ultimate X-Men*, I actually sat down and read everything that had been put out. I had all the hardcovers. I had been reading it, but I took the chance to read it all over again. Reading it, there's little things that I'd pick up, and I'd say, "Oh, I'm gonna want to touch on that." Because, you know, Mark Millar, Bendis, Brian K. Vaughan, they are all gone. They're not writing that book any more. Anything they set up is free game. I can use what they used as a road map, but if they were planning on that going a certain way, well, that's not going to happen anymore because they're not there. So I can go off on a tangent and do whatever I want with anything that they set up. So I sat down and wrote down all the things that I wanted to touch on, things that were set up but hadn't been finished out, and as the new writer on the book, I'm trying to hearken back to all that stuff. The people who have been reading the book since the beginning are going to want to know what's going on. But I also kinda want to make sure that *Ultimate X-Men* kinda feels like it's connected even though there are different writers that have been working on it. I know that a lot of times, especially in the old *X-Men* books, there are some plots that just seem to go away, and there some things that are set up and just aren't followed up on when somebody else came on. To a certain extent, there are things that are set up and are steered a certain way, and then somebody else came on and went, "NOT! We're doing it this way!" I don't want to do that. If I do something that doesn't seem like it was going in that direction before, it's going to look kind of jarring. I'm trying to make everything look seamless, but at the same time, one of the things that I think the book needs more of is more difference from the regular Marvel Universe. As I go forward, I'm going to try and shake things up a little more. Try and do things that aren't things that have happened in some way in the Marvel Universe, just because I don't think that's as entertaining as it could be.

SPOTLIGHT: Some of those elements have already started popping up. For instance, the Shi'Ar race is being introduced as a terrestrial religious organization - even though at this point where you're taking them is unclear. In the X-Men comics of the regular Marvel Universe, the first we meet the Shi'Ar is across the galaxy and they are definitely an alien race, but here, we are set up for something that could be completely different!

ROBERT: Yeah, exactly, the Shi'ar is set up as a religious organization, and to a certain extent, the Ultimate Universe is supposed to be more "real world," more down to earth, and that's also an element of that idea. But there are also plenty of aliens and time travel and all kinds of crazy stuff in there, too.

SPOTLIGHT: And of course, Sabretooth is now revealed to be Wolverine's son.

ROBERT: He is?

SPOTLIGHT: Well, we think he might be.

ROBERT: You think? Sabretooth at least thinks that he is.

SPOTLIGHT: Of course, Sabretooth could be wrong. He could *think* he is Wolverine's son, but be mistaken. Or he could intentionally be lying about being Wolverine's son! Or, he could actually be Wolverine's son, ya never know! In fact, now that I think about it, he could *think* he's lying, but still really be Wolverine's son....I don't know...I'm confusing myself. *(Laughter.)* I think I need to rest.

ROBERT: That's okay. I don't know anything about it, either. *(Laughter.)* But seriously, previous writers set it up that Wolverine had a wife at some point, so I say, "Why not a kid?"

SPOTLIGHT: And if you're going to have a kid, why not Sabretooth?

ROBERT: Makes sense!

SPOTLIGHT: Your run has been notable for starting out with some really heavy character development, all delivered right off the bat. That's a real change of pace from what came before.

ROBERT: Yeah, it's like when I took over *Captain America*. Vaughan did a lot of character development, a lot more than had been done previously, but for the most part, his run was like, "Here's a new villain, and here we're gonna fight him, and here's a new conflict, and here we're going to deal with it." You know? And every arc was kinda self-contained, and there were some threads running through it, but when

LIKE FATHER, LIKE SON? Ultimate X-Men readers have NO idea where the relationship between Sabretooth and Wolverine is going, but it likely involves lots of blood! (From *UXM #67.*)

I came on to write with my first three issues, I didn't really want there to be any fight scenes. But they talked me into putting some fighting in there, just because if you have Tom Raney drawing the book, you don't want to just throw around a bunch of talking.

SPOTLIGHT: Yeah, Raney is spectacular.

ROBERT: So I threw some Wolverine fighting in there, but for the most part, I wanted my first stories to be, "Here's what the characters do, and here's who they are, and here's what they act like." And you know, being a new writer coming on, I wanted to show that I actually know these characters: who they are, how they act.

SPOTLIGHT: Without letting you cheat on a question like this, who are your favorite X-Men characters. And you can't wimp out and say, "I love them all!"

ROBERT: Oh, but I love them all! But really, I do like Jean Grey a lot. And I think Xavier is one of my favorite characters in the book, just because he's got so much mystery around him. He does some shady things from time to time.

SPOTLIGHT: He really does. The Ultimate version of Xavier shows a real cunning side to him, far more than the Marvel Universe version.

ROBERT: Yeah, I like that. I like Colossus.

SPOTLIGHT: You like Colossus, huh?

ROBERT: He's a cool character. He's got some depth to him and stuff. And I guess he's a little gay. *(Laughter.)* But you know, whatever. That's not going to be the main focus of his character forever. But Kitty Pryde, Wolverine? Whatever…I like 'em all.

SPOTLIGHT: There you go!

ROBERT: *(Laughter.)* No, really…Jean and Xavier are my two favorites.

MARVEL KNIGHTS 2099: A story so big, it took Robert Kirkman five weeks to tell it! The Marvel Knights 2099 "fifth week event" included Robert's take on Black Panther, Daredevil, Punisher (all pictured), plus the Inhumans and his own creation, Mutant 2099!

JUBILEE, SLEEPWALKER AND STARTING OUT AT MARVEL

SPOTLIGHT: Another favorite mutant of yours has always been Jubilee, and in fact, your first work at Marvel was writing her series in 2004!

ROBERT: Actually, my first project with Marvel was *Sleepwalker* for the Epic line. The first issue got published in the *Epic Anthology*, along with *Young Ancient One*, and *Strange Magic*.

SPOTLIGHT: That *Epic Anthology* came out under the radar. Few people know what it was, let alone that it existed at all.

ROBERT: It's funny because I was guaranteed six issues of *Sleepwalker* at some point. They contacted me and they said, "We're doing this Epic line, we're opening up everything for submissions, but before we announce it, we want a few other creators that have already done some things in the industry to give it some credibility." They asked me to pitch some books, and since I always like to go for the big guns, I pitched a Sleepwalker book and a Darkhawk book. *(Laughter.)* I'm a huge Sleepwalker fan, but actually I liked the Darkhawk pitch a little better. For some reason, they picked the Sleepwalker one. I guess the way Epic was put together, I assembled the creative team and they were going to give me a flat rate to put these books together. They said, "We're definitely going to do six issues."

At the time, my wife had decided to quit college. She was working as a manager of a coffee shop. She was pretty much the breadwinner at the time, because I was self-publishing and doing some books at Image that, to begin with, weren't doing all that well. When Epic was getting started, *Walking Dead* was coming out and it was starting to do okay, and *Invincible* sales were going up, and things had started to look up, and then Marvel and Epic came along, and I thought if we were going to do six issues, that could be a good way to lead to even more stuff. And my wife was griping about getting old and wanting to go to college and finish that out, because she was 23 at the time, and I told her, "Tell you what. Go ahead and put in your notice! Go ahead and sign up for classes!" Because my first issues wouldn't even be out by the time she was to go into college, so I would be able to make ends meet. Then, two weeks before her last day at work, I got an email that said, "Hey, Epic is folding up, you're only going to do the first issue." And I had already written the first three issues; it was actually two days after I turned in the third issue. *(Laughter.)* I went into full panic mode. I was freaking out and stuff.

SPOTLIGHT: How did your wife respond? Did you get a frying pan upside the head?

ROBERT: No, she just said, "Hey, I'm still going to college. I'm still quitting." Like I said, *Walking Dead* and *Invincible* were doing well, so it's not like I was about to slit my wrists or anything, but things were going to be tight. But I was still freaking out about that. Stephanie Moore, the editor of at Epic, she moved over to the X-Office, and I was still keeping in touch with her, because we had to coordinate the *Epic Anthology*, which was going to print the first issues of material, because, you know, there were thousands upon thousands of people that really wanted it... *(Laughter.)* And we were talking back and forth and I was, like, "Hey, you got anything at all for me? I'll write anything. Whattaya got?"

WHAT IF THOR WAS A HERALD OF GALACTUS? This fun story written by Robert and drawn by Michael Oeming is available in the *What If? Mirror Mirror TPB.*

She said they were doing some stuff for *X-Men Unlimited*, and asked if I was interested in writing stuff for the book. The way that worked was I was to write the story and then Marvel would buy it. They don't hire you to write a story- you write it and if they like it, they'll purchase it, so you could wind up writing something for nothing. And I told her, "Well, I don't want to write a Strong Guy story and then you guys tell me you're not looking for Strong Guy at all." I asked her to send me a list of characters they would be interested in. She sent me a list of a few characters, and I was thinking of plots for those, and then one day she emails me and says, "You know, we're looking for a story about Jubilee, in a mall, causing trouble!" *(Laughter.)*

SPOTLIGHT: Whoah, dude…that's high concept!

ROBERT: Exactly. So I said, "Sign me up! I'm there." So I wrote this twelve-page story and they got Takeshi Miyazawa, who is now doing *Spider-Man Loves Mary Jane*, to draw it. It was a cool little story of her and her friends in a mall, and she fights some security guard guy. When I turned in the script, I included in the email a little note that said, "You know if you ever wanted to do a full book with Jubilee, I'm your man!" I was totally kidding, because I never thought in a million years they'd ever want to do a book on Jubilee, which, honestly, is a character I liked a lot. I came up reading 90s comics, and Wolverine and Jubilee were like Batman and Robin, because for almost the entirety of the 90s, Wolverine was running around with this little girl for some reason. I didn't look at it as a bad gig or anything, but I just never thought she'd deserve her own series.

Stephanie Moore wrote me back and said they were putting something together for Jubilee, and "If you want to pitch for it, go for it!" And as shocked as I was, I pitched for it and somehow I ended up getting it. And that's what led to what you thought was my first Marvel project! It was really *Sleepwalker*, then *X-Men Unlimited*, then *Jubilee!*

SPOTLIGHT: Were you pleased with how *Jubilee* came out?

ROBERT: I was actually very pleased with how *Jubilee* came out. Marvel had a mandate where they didn't want me to use any super-villains at all, which made it a little bit difficult, because I like the super-heroes, and they fight the super-villains, you know? So I had to structure the series to where it was more teen angst, and, you know…teen dances and stuff. *(Laughter.)* It was a lot of fun.

SPOTLIGHT: How do you feel about the depowering of Jubilee from *House of M*? Is that bittersweet for you?

ROBERT: It's important for that kind of thing to happen, and I think Jubilee is as fine a candidate for that to happen as anyone else. Hey, it's not like it can't be undone. *(Laughter.)*

SPOTLIGHT: There's something I'd like to ask really quick, and it's based on a reference that has popped up in some of your comics before, like *Invincible* and *Fantastic Four: Foes*, and that is you have these schools named after the actor Reginald Vel Johnson. What kind of obscure reference is that?

ROBERT: Reginald Vel Johnson is the actor that played Carl in *Family Matters*.

SPOTLIGHT: And he was also in *Die Hard*, the cop that befriends the Bruce Willis character.

ROBERT: Yes, he's also in *Die Hard*. He played the same character in both roles. *(Laughter.)*

SPOTLIGHT: So how do you come up with this guy, of all guys? I mean, there can't be a Reginald Vel Johnson Elementary, can there?

ROBERT: Here's the thing, Cory Walker, the artist on *Invincible*, is a huge, huge fan of *Family Matters*. I've lost count of all the times I've called him and I've been like, "Yo dude, what's up? I just called you to chat." And he's like, "No, I can't chat, dude. I'm watching *Family Matters*." Another thing: he gets mad when people call *Family Matters* "Urkel." When the show was at the height of its popularity because of the Urkel character, people referred to the show as Urkel, they'd say "Oh, I can't wait to see what happens on Urkel tonight!" And that peeves him because the show is actually called *Family Matters*, and Cory feels that the other characters in *Family Matters* are as important, if not MORE important than Urkel. To a certain extent, he believes that Urkel actually cheapened the show. He's a big fan.

So anyway, while we were putting *Invincible* together, he was like, "I am gonna totally name their school after Reginald Vel Johnson!" I was thinking we're gonna print this, and then Reginald Vel Johnson is gonna totally sue us and all…and he was like, "I'm gonna make the principal look like that guy from *Family Matters*," and I was like, "Alright, cool." And so we got Principal Winslow in *Invincible*. And because of that, I was coming up with a name for the high school, because *Invincible's* high school was going to be featured a few times and I didn't want to have a crappy name, and Reginald Vel Johnson sounds like an old president or an inventor from the 1800s. It totally sounds like a real high school. Reginald Vel Johnson High! "Oh, I go to Reginald Vel Johnson High!" And so any time I have a high school in any of my books- there's a character in Brit that goes to Reginald Vel Johnson High. Did I mention that in *FF: Foes* that Franklin Richards goes to Reginald Vel Johnson Elementary School? Which is funny because I think in a later issue of *Fantastic Four*, they're like, "Oh, the kids are totally home schooled by robots!"

There are other things in Invincible, like the Burger Mart, which I think is funny because the logo is a steaming "BM" on a bun. *(Laughter.)* That's funny, right? That's in *Jubilee*, too. Like, they hang out at the Burger Mart in the mall in *Jubilee*.

SPOTLIGHT: Man…a Spotlight scoop: Cory Walker is a huge fan of *Family Matters! (Laughter.)* So, digging into the biography of Robert Kirkman, we find that you were born in 1978, so that puts you at about ten years old when you're first reading comics? The late 80s, right?

ROBERT: Yeah, I think it was 1989 when I first stared reading comics. It was late 80s. I was in sixth grade, I guess. The first comic I ever remember reading was way before that, though; it was a *Captain America* comic. I don't remember which one, or what happened, but that was the first I remember reading.

SPOTLIGHT: Was that an awakening for you as a little kid; like, this is something I really like to spend time doing?

ROBERT: I remember really enjoying it, but I was riding my bike, you know? I didn't have time to be reading comic books. When I was younger, I lived in this really cool neighborhood. Thinking back, it's like I lived in the *Goonies* movie. There was a cliff that we used to jump on our bikes, and there was this wooded area where people had taken two trees and hacked them off so they fell over and crossed themselves in a big X. There were all kinds of crazy things to do in our neighborhood. I had a lot of fun doing stuff outside. I was actually physically fit for the only time in my life. And then came comics!

But I was collecting baseball cards at the time. We had moved away to a small town, and away from the cool *Goonies* neighborhood, to a place

COVER GALLERY

Robert's five-issue Marvel Zombies series is now a bona fide, modern cult classic. Part of its great appeal is no doubt conjured up by the magnificently absurd homages to classic Marvel comic covers by artist Arthur Suydam. Here is a small gallery where you can enjoy a side-by-side comparison of the classic cover and the current "undead" version!

Cover to *Marvel Zombies #2*

Cover to *Amazing Fantasy #15*

Cover to *Avengers #4*

Cover to *Marvel Zombies #1*

Cover to *Avengers #4*

Cover to *Marvel Zombies #3*

Cover to *Marvel Zombies #3 variant*

Cover to *Incredible Hulk #340*

where they had a comic shop/baseball card shop that my dad would take me to. My dad was a big fan of the *Metal Men* when he was little, the old DC book. My dad was a sheet metal worker/fabricator, and he took to the *Metal Men* early.

He was in the baseball card shop, and he saw this book called *Iron Man*, and he thought it was a spin-off of *Metal Men*, and so he bought what had to have been ten or twenty issues of Iron Man. Most of it was the John Byrne/John Romita, Jr. stuff, back when Mandarin was working with Fin Fang Foom and he fought the Living Laser and the Titanium Man. So he bought those and they were lying around my house, and those were the first comics I remember specifically reading.

SPOTLIGHT: That's so cool, to know your dad's love of comics related in some way to his occupation as a metal worker. Which came first? *Metal Men* or his job?

ROBERT: *Metal Men*, by far.

SPOTLIGHT: Did he ever tell you if reading *Metal Men* got him interested in the career of metal working?

ROBERT: I seriously doubt it did. *(Laughter.)* If they make a movie out of my dad's life, though, I'm sure they'll make it so that reading *Metal Men* inspired him to one day become a sheet metal worker.

So yeah, those *Iron Men* comics were lying around, and I read those and really liked them, and next time we went to the cards/comic store, I was looking at the comics a little bit more. I don't recall if I ever bought anything, but that store later closed down, and maybe a year later, I started buying comics at the Wal-Mart. I got into Erik Larsen's *Spider-Man* run, and I got Jim Lee/Chris Claremont's *X-Men* run.

I think the 90s get a bad rap. I think everybody's comics that they read when they were little were really crappy. I mean, if you read 70s comics they're goofy as hell, and even some of the 60s stuff, you read them, and go, "What? Come on! Asbestos buzzsaw? Seriously?" *(Check your copies of FF #11 from 1963 to see what Robert is talking about! –Ed.)* But really, it's all about the age at when you hit them. If you hit them from the ages of nine to fourteen years old, you're going to love whatever it is. I still look back at some of the comics that came out in the 90s and go, "Oh, these things are sweet!"

DAWN OF THE MARVEL ZOMBIES

SPOTLIGHT: *Marvel Zombies.* This comic of yours just completed its five issue run, and it is really a sensation. Each issue sold more copies than the previous issue, as well as as getting more printings than any other comic in recent memory. Back issues are going for a healthy amount of bucks on the back market. And it's the most absurd, ridiculous thing I've ever read. And I mean that in a great, great, great way…I mean that in the highest praise possible! Actually, it reminds me a lot of *Thor: Vikings*, by Garth Ennis and Glen Fabry Did you ever read that?

The cover to the upcoming Marvel Zombies HC, inspired by the classic cover to *Secret Wars #1*

ROBERT: Yeah, *Thor: Vikings* was awesome!

SPOTLIGHT: I thought nothing could get more absurd or crazy than that. And I was wrong.

ROBERT: You were wrong! How dare you doubt me?

SPOTLIGHT: Ohhhh....where do we begin? How in God's name did this comic ever get conceived? Who thought of this? This comic is so full of blood, gore and mayhem it's astonishing.

ROBERT: I was under the impression that it happened like this: I was on the phone with Tom Brevoort one day, and I was bragging about the *Walking Dead* trade numbers, because my goal at Marvel was to get on a high-profile regular series, so I was always like, "*Walking Dead* is doing good...and I know you've got *Iron Man*!!! Blah blah blah..." And so I was chatting with him and I was like, I just got a new sales report, the yearly thing where Diamond noted the Top 100 trades of the year, and *Walking Dead* was #10, 12, 14 and 18 or whatever...and I was like, "Check that out!" And Tom was like, " Oh, congrats kid! Nobody cares!" And then I said, "If you ever want anything done with zombies in it, let me know!" And I was totally joking! And I think that day, or maybe the next day, there was an announcement that they were going to do a *Mort the Dead Teenager* movie, which I guess never happened, and he was like, "Oh, I don't know...maybe there's something...let me get off the phone and talk to somebody." And I'm like, "What are you talking about, Tom?" And he said, "I think I have an idea for something you can do...hang on!" And I thought he was gonna call me up and be like, "Hey, you wanna do this Mort the Dead Teenager book?"

And then, like two or three weeks later, Ralph Macchio called and he said they were doing this Ultimate Fantastic Four arc where we're trying to make it look like the Ultimate FF meet the FF from the Marvel Universe, but what they're actually doing is meeting this zombie Fantastic Four. And I said, "Well, that sounds crazy." And he was like, "Yeah. And we're thinking that we want to do this mini-series that takes place in this zombie universe!" And there was no title. They didn't know what it was going to be called. To be brutally honest, I thought, "Yeah, I had to do Walking Dead, and I don't want to be the 'zombie guy'. I'm really worried that people are going to say, "Well all that guy can do is zombie books!" Every time Bendis mentions me online now, he says, "Oh, that zombie guy...blah blah blah." And he thinks that's funny. Because he's a jerk. *(Laughter.)*

So I was really reluctant to take it, but Ralph Macchio is the Ultimate guy, and I really like the Ultimate Universe and I wanted to work in that, and I knew that would be my foot in the door with Macchio and in the back of my mind I had this idea that one day I'd like to do this Marvel Universe crossover that involved a zombie plague and the Marvel heroes stopping it. It wasn't like Marvel Zombies, though, so it was kinda neat that I already had this idea. So as far as I know, Tom Brevoort suggested it to Ralph, because a few weeks later, I was saying to Ralph, "Tom mentioned to me this Marvel Zombies thing. Is that the thing you were talking about that one time?" And he was like, "Yeah, yeah!" So I don't know if they already had plans for it and he knew about it or if he came up with the idea and ran in there and told Ralph, "Get Kirkman to do a mini-series about that crap that Millar is doing in Ultimate Fantastic Four!" So I don't know how it all happened.

ZOMBIE IRON MAN: First wommizing, then alcoholism, now Tony Stark adds flesh-eating to his list of addictions. (From *Marvel Zombies* #3.)

Original black and white pencil art from Robert's upcoming Ant-Man series.

SPOTLIGHT: So all you know is that this project landed in your lap?

ROBERT: That's right. I got this call and that's it. And nobody thought it would do well. I'm serious. Well, there was one person: I was on the phone with Bendis and I was telling him about the Zombies project and he was like, "Really? What's this?" And I explained to him that it was this thing in Ultimate Fantastic Four with zombies running around. I told him that Marvel kept calling it Marvel Zombies and I didn't like that title, I thought it sounded kind of silly. And Bendis was like, "No! Make sure that it's called Marvel Zombies! If that thing's called Marvel Zombies, it's gonna sell crazy! You watch!" And I was like, "Sure, sure…whatever, man." Because you know Bendis, he thinks everything sells crazy. All his books sell crazy. He doesn't know. He doesn't know how the world works. But he seemed to know about Marvel Zombies.

I talked to Ralph Macchio about this recently and he goes, "Yeah, that Marvel Zombies thing sure was a surprise!" You know? Like, "We didn't think that thing would do anything at all, but look at that!" Wow, guys… thanks for having faith in me! *(Laughter.)*

SPOTLIGHT: So they had no idea going in, and your pitches didn't help clarify what they had going, either?

ROBERT: When they came to me, they had no idea. They had this universe where everybody's a zombie. "Here are these Ultimate FF scripts. Whattaya think?" The original plot that I came up with was "Luke Cage: Last Man On Earth." I was like, well, Luke Cage has unbreakable skin, so he can't be a zombie! Nobody could ever bite him, so he would be the last man on Earth! And the plot was going to be that there were small pockets of civilization, and Luke Cage was working for the zombies to infiltrate them as a human- to live there for a while and let the zombies come in and kill all these people, because Jessica Jones has been turned into a zombie, but his child had not, so they still had his daughter. They were using his daughter to find people for them to eat or whatever, and then he was going to turn against them, and then lead some army against the Marvel Zombies, and it would have been a retarded story. So I had that story plotted, and in Mark Millar's script, he'd say, "Reed Richards is running from the Marvel Zombies," or he would say, the Hulk does this or Moon Knight does that, but I didn't see the pages until I turned in a few emails to Ralph Macchio with ideas and suggestions. And lo and behold, there's Luke Cage running around and eating people in Ultimate FF. I guess Greg Land didn't know about the whole unbreakable skin thing. I'm not even gonna bring up the fact that Zombie Vision is running around in a bunch of panels. I'm not gonna bring that up. *(Laughter.)*

SPOTLIGHT: I think the great thing about Marvel Zombies is that the rules are whatever you decide to make them. What matters most is really gross, deformed nasty zombies eating people and doing it in a fun and wholesome way. And you pull that off!

ROBERT: Well, thank you! You know, we didn't really start out with having anyone for them to eat, because one of the other things that Mark Millar did was say that they had eaten all the people. And then Ralph Macchio says, "Hey man, do five issues of this." I was like, "But they don't have anyone to eat!"

SPOTLIGHT: Well, I think you solved all those problems perfectly. Maybe the editors thought they would paint you into a corner and let you write your way out. And darned if you didn't! And the stuff with Spider-Man, eating Mary Jane and Aunt May and feeling really bad about it, that was priceless!

ROBERT: Yeah, we're doing a prequel in December that will actually show that. So that's cool. We're also gonna show the Avengers eating Jarvis. *(Laughter.)*

More original black and white pencil art from Ant-Man, scheduled to premiere in October!

HERE COMES ANT-MAN!

SPOTLIGHT: Ant-Man has had an interesting history at Marvel Comics, with previous heroes wearing the cybernetic ant-helmet including Henry Pym and Scott Lang. Your new series, due out in October, offers up a whole new identity for the character of Ant-Man. In fact, there's actually two men who will be taking up the role. How does that work?

ROBERT: We don't know! *(Laughter.)* There are two bumbling guys- well, I say two bumbling guys, but it's really a dark, non-comedic book- and they are SHIELD agents who are not the best agents in the world. Well, one of them is, and one of them isn't. They are two best friends since childhood and they've followed each other through college and then the military and SHIELD, and they accidentally come into possession of the Ant-Man armor that Hank Pym is developing for SHIELD to be used for espionage purposes. (Well, they actually steal it.) Because a guy that can shrink down in size would be a pretty good spy. They have adventures in the armor and adventures in the Helicarrier. And then things go south.

SPOTLIGHT: So the tone of this book is serious?

ROBERT: It's really off the wall. It's not the darkest- it's not Moon Knight or anything. But there are definite undertones of darkness. It's a very serious kind of book; it's not Marvel Team-Up.

SPOTLIGHT: Did you want to bring that kind of a tone to a character like Ant-Man, a guy who usually brings up lighthearted visions in the minds of most fans?

ROBERT: Yeah, for the most part I wanted to do something different with the character, and plus, I've done a lot of books lately that have been kind of "Ha ha! Superheroes!" and so I wanted to show people that I can do other books like Walking Dead that aren't zombie related.

SPOTLIGHT: Who's the rest of your creative team on that book?

ROBERT: Phil Hester is the artist, Andy Parks inks, and Bill Crabtree is the colorist. He's done FF, Foes and Invincible.

SPOTLIGHT: Is Ant-Man a character you feel any kind of background with?

ROBERT: Ant-Man is really cool, because he's one of the original guys from the 60s. He's never had a regular series all of his own!

SPOTLIGHT: Right. He held down the lead superhero feature in Tales to Astonish and then in the early 70s, the Scott Lang character was part of the Marvel Feature anthology. But even so, he's never actually had a book named Ant-Man!

ROBERT: That's right! Until now! And it's gonna bomb terribly! *(Laughter.)* No . . . it's kinda cool. He's like the "last holdout", he's the guy that never got a series, even in the years in the early 70s where Marvel was no longer being distributed by DC and they decided to go crazy with lots of titles. And now I get to write him!

That's one thing Robert Kirkman is good at: writing! But if you've been on board Ultimate X-Men, Marvel Zombies, and his creator owned books like Walking Dead and Invincible, you already know that! Since the Spotlight offices are quite fond of Ant-Man and ant-related comics in general (our secretary Madge is part army ant), we'll be eagerly awaiting Robert's upcoming take on the Ant-Man mythos. Huh? Why are you laughing? There is too such a thing as the Ant-Man mythos! What kinda comics fan are you? See ya in the fall with Ant-Man and more zombies, Robert, and we'll see you each month in the pages of Ultimate X-Men!

MARVEL TEAM-UP:

ROBERT KIRKMAN AND THE MARVEL UNIVERSE!

Marvel Team-Up has been a ton of fun for fans of the Marvel Universe and its broad expanse of characters. Robert has worked overtime to include as many different super heroes as he possibly could, matching the super-popular with the not-so-super-popular in stories that brim over with enthusiasm and love for Marvel characters.

As the series winds down with issue #25, we provide a list of the first 21 issues worth of marvelous Marvel Team-Ups, and a collage of the colorful characters that had them!

MTU #1: Spider-Man/Wolverine
MTU #2: Spider-Man/Wolverine
MTU #3: Fantastic Four/Dr. Strange
MTU #4: FF/Dr. Strange/Hulk
MTU #5: Sunfire/Spider-Man/Fantastic Four/X-23
MTU #6: Captain America/Spider-Man/X-23/Black Widow
MTU #7: Moon Knight/Spider-Man
MTU #8: Blade/Punisher
MTU #9: Daredevil/Luke Cage/Sleepwalker/Black Cat
MTU #10: Wolverine/Captain America/Spider-Man/Moon Knight
MTU #11: Spider-Man/Nova/Ms. Marvel/She-Hulk/Dr. Strange/Wolverine/Hulk
MTU #12: Spider-Man/Nova/Ms. Marvel/She-Hulk/Dr. Strange/Wolverine/Hulk
MTU #13: Spider-Man/Nova/Ms. Marvel/She-Hulk/Dr. Strange/Wolverine/Hulk
MTU #14: Invincible/Spider-Man
MTU #15: Gravity/Darkhawk/Speedball
MTU #16: Gravity/Darkhawk/Speedball/X-23/Arana/Terror/Dagger/Sleepwalker
MTU #17: Gravity/Darkhawk/Speedball/X-23/Mutant 2099/Terror/Dagger/Sleepwalker/Reed Richards
MTU #18: Gravity/Darkhawk/Speedball/X-23/Mutant 2099/Terror/Dagger/Sleepwalker/Reed Richards
MTU #19: Wolverine/Jubilee/Cable
MTU #20: Captain America/Freedom Ring
MTU #21: Freedom Ring/Spider-Man/Astonishing X-Men

INVINCIBLE is TM and © Robert Kirkman and Cory Walker.

INSIDE PITCH

Robert came on to the Marvel radar screen after the slow building success of *Invincible* and *Walking Dead* had helped him make a name for himself. Emboldened to pitch a few new series for Marvel, he offered up two proposals that had designs on bringing back two of his favorite characters from the 90s era of Marvel Comics: Darkhawk and Sleepwalker. Marvel Spotlight is happy to share Robert's pitch for Darkhawk. Though it may not have gone anywhere at the time, his Darkhawk pitch nonetheless gives a glimpse into Robert's fertile mind as a comics creator.

DARKHAWK PROPOSAL

INTRODUCTION:

Continuity IMMEDIATELY gets thrown out the window. The five people left that remembers the original Darkhawk comic series won't be happy... until they read the book. I'm going to be updating everything, reworking how the characters interact and making the entire book more modern. It's my belief that Darkhawk is a strong character in Marvel's stable. It will be a hard sell at first because of its early '90s connections, but after people see the book, all doubt will be long gone.

THE PREMISE:

This time around, we're going to break away from the Spider-Man formula that made Darkhawk seem so derivative. Rather than Chris Powell, student at Peter Parker's old high school, his father, police officer Mike Powell will find the Darkhawk amulet. I feel that this will add another layer of drama to the book. Darkhawk: upholding the law by day, breaking it by night. With the FX show "The Shield" receiving the Emmy, and the Golden Globe this year for best drama I think the world is very receptive to the bending-the-law-to-do-good concept that show centers around. Adding a super-heroic twist to it can only make the premise more appealing... in a Marvel sort of way.

Mike Powell's adventures as a police officer can be at least as compelling as his adventures as Darkhawk. Imagine if being a freelance photographer (or science teacher, or web designer) was non-stop action, Spider-Man would be a much more action oriented book. Comic readers love fights and characterization, by making the non-super-hero part of Mike's life as action packed as his super-hero life, the area where most writers do their characterization can now be as compelling as the rest of the book, cutting down on what readers consider "down time."

Not to say that there won't be any down time. Mike's family will play a large supporting role in the book. His wife Grace Powell is the district attorney, they like to think that Mike does the pitching and Grace hits the homeruns, referring to Mike catching the bad guys and Grace making sure they go to jail. This adds tremendous conflict to Mike's life as he worries what Grace would think if she were to find out where he spends all his late nights. Rounding out their family is their three kids, Chris (Darkhawk from the original series), who is in high school, and the twins Jonathan and Jason, who are both 10 years old. With his mother and father having such demanding jobs Chris steps up to help out around the house and by taking care of his brothers. This will add another layer of conflict because Chris is under such tremendous stress with his own life he is beginning to resent his mother and father for relying on him so much.

THE BREAKDOWN:

ARC ONE/issues 1-4

We'll open with mob boss Philippe Bazin (one of the major reoccurring villains from the original series) holding a meeting. Here is where we will establish that Bazin is smuggling a very powerful artifact into the country, and will be offering it up to the highest bidder. Those in attendance for the auction will be a who's who of Marvel's cool, but underused villains, most of which I'll compile later, Tombstone will be one for sure. The object here is to take villains that have fallen by the wayside and bring them up to what they should have been. Tombstone has buckets of potential, cool visual, cool name. He could be the next Doctor Doom, or Kingpin.

From the meeting our story leads us to the docks, where the aforementioned artifact is being smuggled in. Leading a raid on the docks is Police Officer Mike Powell. This is where we'll be introduced to him for the first time. Needless to say this raid leads to Mike becoming the owner of the artifact being smuggled in, the amulet that causes the transformation into Darkhawk. During a gun fight with the employees of the docks Mike takes a bullet to the leg and is knocked down. He has to crawl for cover as the gunfight continues. Mike stumbles upon a broken crate containing the amulet and the rest is history. By using the amulet to switch into Darkhawk, Mike is essentially switching bodies with someone somewhere (which is something we'll get to later). When Mike is hurt, turning into Darkhawk and then back heals him, and the same works for Darkhawk. His mind stays the same in both bodies, but he soon learns that when he is Darkhawk he is in a completely different body, with a different voice, and face.

He decides to keep the amulet, which is a small jewel at the end of a necklace that he can hide discreetly under his clothes. He considers it to be his edge on the war against crime and quickly begins to use his free time to learn how to use his newfound super-powers.

During this time, Mike is spending what little time he had off practicing his new powers. This leaves his eldest son Chris to watch his younger brothers more than he has the patience to. He eventually gets fed up and runs away. Which gives Mike something more to do with his time... looking for his missing son.

In the course of the initial arc we learn that Mike's wife, Grace is building a strong case against Bazin, in an effort to finally put him behind bars for good. This is something she works on in-between cases, a pet project of sorts. It's a very time consuming task she's set out to do and it adds to her son Chris' breakdown.

One evening while searching for his son as Darkhawk, Mike Powell stumbles across a super-villain free for all that he's partly responsible for. It seems that the villains that were gathered to buy the amulet from Bazin have turned on him. Darkhawk swoops in to attempt to hold the villains at bay, but he fails. With so many adversaries coming at him at once, he gets sloppy. He ends up hurling one villain into a condemned building, which causes it to collapse on the villain, who survives, and Bazin, who does not. This is the first death Powell has caused as Darkhawk, and he does not take it lightly.

Chris later returns home, with immense apologies in tow. He's welcomed back, with minor scolding and the family is back together again.

With Bazin dead, Grace Powell's case is over before it was even built. Undaunted, her search for justice continues as she becomes determined to find Bazin's killer. Which puts her hot on the trail of her own husband, Darkhawk.

ARC TWO/Issues 5-8

Without the fast and furious pace that kept him busy in the initial arc, Mike Powell begins to ask questions about where his new powers come from. He begins to question where the Darkhawk body comes from, and where his body goes while he is transformed.

One day, while changing after work, Mike notices an address etched on his skin (like a temporary tattoo or something). Above the address there is a simple note, "come alone." The address is in Belgium, so it's no easy task for Mike to get time off from work and away from his family, but he realizes this is his only chance to find out the truth about Darkhawk. He comes up with a story for his family involving some sort of overseas connection to Bazin's organization (which is still under investigation after his death) and takes some time off from work. Because he now realizes that his body is being transported to another place when he becomes Darkhawk he decides not to change into him again until he gets to the bottom of this.

This will be the fish out of water arc, where we take our main character and strip away everything he's familiar with. Mike will be surrounded by new and strange environments and we'll get to see how he interacts with them.

In Belgium, he slowly makes his way to the address he was given. It turns out to be a remote military installation. Inside, Mike is greeted by scientists and military personnel. Everyone is being suspiciously friendly to him, and he has a bad feeling about the whole situation. It is explained to Mike that they were backwards-engineering alien teleportation technology for military use. They show him a sort of station where his body is kept while he is Darkhawk. They say that they were about to begin human testing before the amulet was stolen.

Nothing fits. Mike Powell doesn't know why, or how, but he just doesn't believe them. When he refuses to turn over the amulet and is threatened with his life he decides to make a break for it. He turns into Darkhawk and when his body materializes in the chamber he was shown, he grabs it and runs. In the process of escaping as Darkhawk, he is shot twice and is severely wounded. He realizes that the only way to get out of this alive is to turn back into Mike Powell, but as he does so he is forced to immediately change back into Darkhawk because his attackers have found him out.

A battle ensues, resulting in the destruction of the military installation. Mike is worried that his body has been destroyed, but a scientist, who is near death explains the truth to him. It seems that this place was trying to backwards engineer the amulet, but all they had succeeded in doing was interrupting the signal, directing the host's body to their facility. They don't know how it works, or where the body goes otherwise... they don't even really know where the amulet comes from. But with the installation destroyed, the threat to Mike's body is gone... but he's back to where he started in terms of knowing more about Darkhawk.

What he returns home to isn't much better than what he just left. It seems in the time he was away, his wife, Grace has put together the pieces that lead directly to him. She knows something is up, and she wants answers.

ARC THREE/Issues 9-12

There's no way around it. Mike breaks down, and tells his wife his secret. She does not react favorably, and Mike finds himself kicked out of his own home. To make matters worse, the group of villains from the first arc are now after Darkhawk, thinking that's the only way they can get the power they were willing to buy from Bazin.

This is the arc where everything falls apart for Mike. He's the lowest he can get here. How he picks up the pieces and puts everything back together will determine how the book continues from here on out. I'm thinking that Grace and Mike will probably get a divorce, or at least be in the process of getting one, and Mike will get his own apartment. Chris will later decide that he would rather live with his father, and he could move into the apartment with Mike. Through this, we can have Chris find out Mike's secret and even have a story where Chris steals the amulet from his father and goes out as Darkhawk himself.

CONCLUSION:

I think Darkhawk is one of the visually strongest characters that came out of Marvel in the early '90s. I think he is recognizable enough that most people will at least remember him, and I'm sure there's at least a few that will be glad to see him back. I think he has limitless dramatic potential with the cop angle, and the size and structure of his family. If done right, I think Darkhawk could easily be brought back into the center of the Marvel Universe and become one of the old standbys.

Thank you for your time, and consideration. I look forward to hearing back from you.

MARVEL SPOTLIGHT

GREGORY LAND • Official Handbook

REAL NAME: Gregory Land
DATE OF BIRTH: January 24, 1963
OCCUPATION: Comic book artist
PLACE OF BIRTH: Terre Haute, IN
PLACE OF RESIDENCE: Trinity, FL
WEBSITE: www.fan-fare.so
FIRST COMICS APPEARANCE: New Mutants Annual #6, 1996
FIRST MARVEL COMICS APPEARANCE: X-Men Unlimited #13, 1996

HISTORY: Greg Land's art style is instantly recognizable for its intense photorealism and increasingly lush qualities, which gives his comic art a rich and oftentimes sensual emotional perspective. His recent conversion to drawing Marvel Comics has coincided with a further evolution in his craft that he developed while at DC Comics and CrossGen, and though his work for Marvel is, at this current date, primarily built around two series and a portfolio of covers, Marvel fans can rest assured: Greg is definitely a Marvel Zombie!

He grew up in Terre Haute, Indiana, a small town nestled between the big city of Indianapolis and the bigger city of Chicago, a part of America's heartland where it's easy to enjoy life's simple pleasures and dream big at the same time. Greg was a KISS loving teenager who loved cars, comics and girls; it's not hard to imagine a young Greg Land in a life not dissimilar to That 70s Show, hitting the midnight monster movies with the young woman who would later become his wife (see the photo included with this Handbook entry: dressing up as Frankenstein obviously didn't scare her away)! His lifelong love of comics, especially 70s era Marvel Comics, was a part of his larger interest in art and drawing, and early experimentation in pencil drawing and designing layouts (thanks to cutting up comic panels and rearranging them in his own story sequences) helped cultivate his abilities in that area.

Greg and his girlfriend both took off for college upon graduation from high school, but whereas many kids take off for big state colleges or private universities far from home, they went down the street to the Indiana State University campus in their home town of Terre Haute. There, Greg got his bachelor in fine art degrees in drawing and painting, but this didn't pay off until years later. First, Greg worked for nearly ten years in a local screen printing outfit; though this job helped Greg learn quite a bit about life and work, he wanted more out of life, and he decided to put his art skills to the test. If drawing was going to work for him, the time was now to make it happen.

It was in the early 90s when Greg started developing a portfolio of drawing samples that he took around to local conventions in the Midwest. He got enough attention from some indie self publishers that he met at the Mid-Ohio Con to be able to help create Storm Quest in 1995. It wasn't long before Greg's talents had grown to the point where he was drawing the Bat-books Nightwing and Birds of Prey for DC Comics. But his big career break came when he bundled his wife up and left Indiana for Tampa, Florida and started to draw for CrossGen Comics. Thriving in their studio environment, Greg drew almost the entire run of the popular comic Sojourn, gaining a loyal fanbase in the process. It was at CrossGen when his gifts at drawing incredibly beautiful women came into evidence, and to this day, he has developed that skill as one of his calling cards as an artist. When CrossGen folded up, Greg headed over to Marvel, where he could put his former credentials as a Marvel zombie into play- literally!

His first major work for Marvel was drawing the five issue mini-series Phoenix: Endsong, written by Greg Pak. It was a story that detailed the reemergence of the Phoenix force after Grant Morrison's New X-Men run once more ended the life of Jean Grey. Next up for Greg was Ultimate Fantastic Four, which he is still drawing at this time. His very first stab at drawing Mark Millar's scripts included the first ever rendering of what are now referred to as the "Marvel Zombies," the characters that have taken the comics world by storm in 2006.

Next up for Greg is Ultimate Power, the big event for 2006 in the Ultimate Universe. It will be a nine-issue blockbuster series in which the heroes the Ultimate U cross paths with the Squadron Supreme. It's a project that is perfectly appropriate for someone of Greg Land's esteem with Marvel and with his fans. With each new project, Greg's star rises even higher and higher, casting a light on the path of a career that is only now just beginning.

THE GREG LAND MARVEL COMICS LIBRARY:

Phoenix: Endsong #1-5 (2005)
Ultimate Fantastic Four #21-32 (2005-06)
X-Men Unlimited #13 (1996)

GREG LAND COVERS/PIN-UPS

Black Widow #1-6
Daredevil #65
Gambit #1
House of M #6 (variant cover)
Marvel Romance Redux: Love Is A Four-Letter Word
Powerless #5
Uncanny X-Men #448, 449, 453
Wolverine #26-28
Wolverine/Punisher #5
X-Men: The End #1-6
X-Men: The End - Heroes and Martyrs #1-6

COLLECT 'EM IN TRADE:

Phoenix: Endsong HC
Phoenix: Endsong TPB
Ultimate Fantastic Four Vol. 5: Crossover TPB

MARVEL SPOTLIGHT

THE SPOTLIGHT INTERVIEW WITH GREG LAND

Greg Land built up a huge and loyal following during his tenure on CrossGen's Sojourn, which he penciled for almost three years before moving on to Marvel Comics! Since arriving at Marvel, he's showcased his incredible and unique style of photorealism in the comic books he's drawn, including Greg Pak's *Phoenix: Endsong* mini-series, which is must reading for any X-Men fan, and now *Ultimate Fantastic Four*, the triumphant comeback for series creator and scripter Mark Millar, where Greg got to draw the coming of Namor, the Skrulls, and a flesh-eating gaggle of super-heroes now anointed as the "Marvel Zombies". His run on *Ultimate FF* is a wild ride that's now winding down for Greg as he moves on to another Marvel project that is even bigger than his first two! We catch up with Greg to talk about all this and more, and all while he's taking care of business at his drawing board!

GREG: I'll try and do a little drawing while we're talking.

SPOTLIGHT: No problem! That's a very popular pastime that artists seem to have.

GREG: *(Laughter.)* Yeah, there's not a lot of downtime unfortunately.

SPOTLIGHT: Yeah, you've got a lot on your plate. What kind of page are you working on right now?

GREG: [redacted] where the military are all standing around chit-chatting about what to do with all these Marvel Zombies.

SPOTLIGHT: Gotta love those zombies.

GREG: I do. I do enjoy them.

SPOTLIGHT: The zombies are 180 degrees from the beautiful women and the heroic looking men you are known for drawing.

GREG: Yeah. I thoroughly enjoy drawing beautiful women, but my [redacted] to draw zombies is pretty cool.

SPOTLIGHT: You had the honor of getting to conceptualize the so-called "Marvel Zombies" that is currently a phenomenon right now, what with the mini-series building off what you and Mark Millar created in the pages of your first story arc in *Ultimate FF*. Did you have any clue at all what Marvel was projecting in the future for the zombies?

GREG: No, no, not really. I've not been involved with any of the stories as far as the direction they're going or anything like that.

PHOENIX: ENDSONG: The Phoenix rises again in Greg Pak and Greg Land's post *New X-Men* masterpiece.

The cover to *Phoenix: Endsong #3, right,* shows Phoenix in flight against the backdrop of her fellow X-Men. *Below,* Greg's gorgeous drawing of the return of Phoenix has an ominous subtext, with a wary Wolverine in the background. Things, as usual, are not as they appear.

SPOTLIGHT: But it must have come as a surprise to you to see the escalating success it has been having.

GREG: Yes, it was a surprise! It's totally cool to see they've taken off the way that they have.

SPOTLIGHT: Did you have any inspirations for modeling your zombies? They sort of have a *Night of the Living Dead* vintage look to them.

GREG: I've got a big DVD and VHS collection of movies and when I actually started on the project, I put in different ones and let them play while I was sitting here drawing, and kind of let some of that imagery soak into me and let it soak into the page.

SPOTLIGHT: Well, whatever you did, your zombies looked *great.* Well, they didn't look great, they looked *absolutely disgusting,* but that's what you were going for, so job well done!

GREG: Yeah, that's definitely what we were going for! *(Laughter.)*

SPOTLIGHT: So before we get knee-deep into zombies, tell us a little about your background. Where are you from?

GREG: I was born and raised in Terra Haute, Indiana.

SPOTLIGHT: Do you go back to Terra Haute that often?

GREG: I haven't been in a couple years, but all my family is there and my wife's family is up there, but they usually come visit us in Florida. Terra Haute is where they started the KISS Army, you know!

SPOTLIGHT: Oh yeah? Were you part of the KISS Army?

GREG: Never actually a member, but I'm actually a big KISS fan anyway. I got to see them play up there a couple times.

SPOTLIGHT: Do they come to Terra Haute and play there as a special tribute?

GREG: Yeah, they used to do that back in the day. They used to come there quite often.

SPOTLIGHT: So is KISS your favorite band?

GREG: Definitely. That's the only band I actually care to go see in concert, just because the show they put on, it's so much like a comic book come to life.

SPOTLIGHT: Do you get any inspiration from them in that regard?

GREG: Well, you know, inspiration in terms of the way they're so enthusiastically visual: the wild costumes, the way they put on their shows with all the pyrotechnics and the blood and all that good stuff. Because when Gene starts drooling the blood down his chin, that's when I'm kinda inspired with these zombies, you know? Blood just dripping down and onto their chest... *(Laughter.)*

SPOTLIGHT: How long did you live in Terra Haute?

GREG: Until I was thirty. I met my wife in high school there, and we got married in 1985. We graduated in 1981, so after we graduated college at Indiana State University in Terra Haute, we got married.

SPOTLIGHT: Were you into comics in high school?

GREG: Yeah, you can date my comics collection back to when I was five or six; that's when I started. My grandpa would buy me these large masonite boards, and I would literally cut up my old comics- cut out the figures- and paste them onto the masonite boards and kinda create my own little comic scenarios on there. I kinda wish I had some of those books still! *(Laughter.)* Some of that stuff would have been nice to still have.

SPOTLIGHT: Did you read DC or Marvel?

GREG: Primarily Marvel. I literally was a Marvel Zombie. Things kinda came full circle when I came onto this project and got to draw the zombies

SPOTLIGHT: I suppose you just did a few self-portraits to get started and off you went!

GREG: You got it! *(Laughter.)*

SPOTLIGHT: Where did comics rank in your pop culture desires back then? Were they tops on the list?

GREG: Oh yeah. I thoroughly enjoyed comics. One of the things I looked forward to most in the week was going to Rexall Drug Store on the corner of 7th and Seabury to look at the new comics and get a chocolate shake. My grandparents used to take me there and that was always something we really enjoyed doing together. That's what I liked about comics back then, as opposed to nowadays, where you get so much pre-information about a book before it even comes out. You kinda lose that "Christmas morning surprise." Back then, when you picked up a book, you knew nothing about it. You got to flip through the book and see all that cool stuff happening for the first time. Nowadays, they try and leak out as much information as they can. I think now people can get a preconception about what's going on in a book, and it's almost like it's not a brand new thing to them, because they already know some of the backstory.

SPOTLIGHT: I love Previews, but I often skim through them without reading solicit text, because I just don't want to know what's going to happen.

GREG: One of the things that bugs me, like when they announce, "Someone will die in this issue!" Well, what's the surprise then? That's the tragedy when someone dies: it just happens without expectation. You're not going to prerecord this statement: "This persons gonna die." It kinda takes the tragedy and emotion out of it.

SPOTLIGHT: That's a big difference between then and now in comics, that's for sure. The influence of the internet can take a lot of the blame for that. Back when you were reading comics in high school, did you hide your comic book hobby from your girlfriend?

GREG: The girl I was serious with, I ended up marrying her, and she knew all about my comics. *(Laughter.)*

SPOTLIGHT: Good for her!

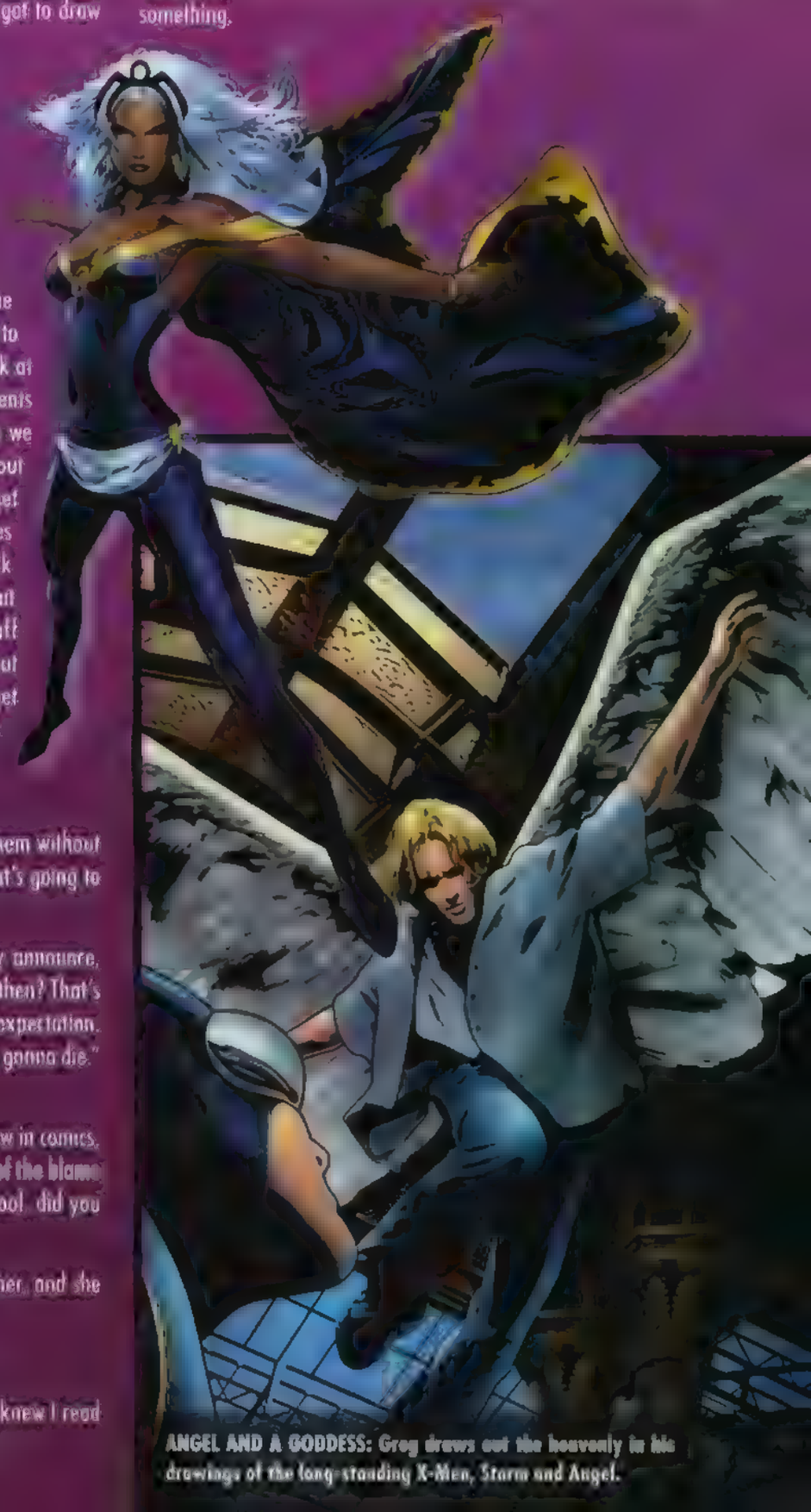
GREG: She wasn't a comic person by any means, but she knew I read comics, and it wasn't a sticking point, let's put it that way.

SPOTLIGHT: You started off conceptualizing artwork and storytelling when your grandfather provided you with those masonite boards. Did that develop immediately into a love for drawing, or did that come later?

GREG: No, ever since I was a kid in grade school, drawing is always what I did. There was just never a time when I didn't do artwork. I always had sketchbooks that my mom or dad or grandparents would buy me, and I just sat there and drew whatever, sitting there watching TV or a football game, and I'd either draw comic book type situations or I'd draw football games, or whatever came to mind.

SPOTLIGHT: When did you start feeling like you had developed an aptitude to be really good?

GREG: Well, I guess by the time of grade school, my stuff would always be picked for the displays, or I would be chosen to do a mural in the class or that kind of thing. Pretty much early on, I felt I had a little something.



ANGEL AND A GODDESS: Greg draws out the heavenly in his drawings of the long-standing X-Men, Storm and Angel.

GREG'S FF IS THE ULTIMATE! Sue, Ben and Johnny get an eyeful of something spectacular in *Ultimate Fantastic Four #23.*

SPOTLIGHT: Did you study art in college?

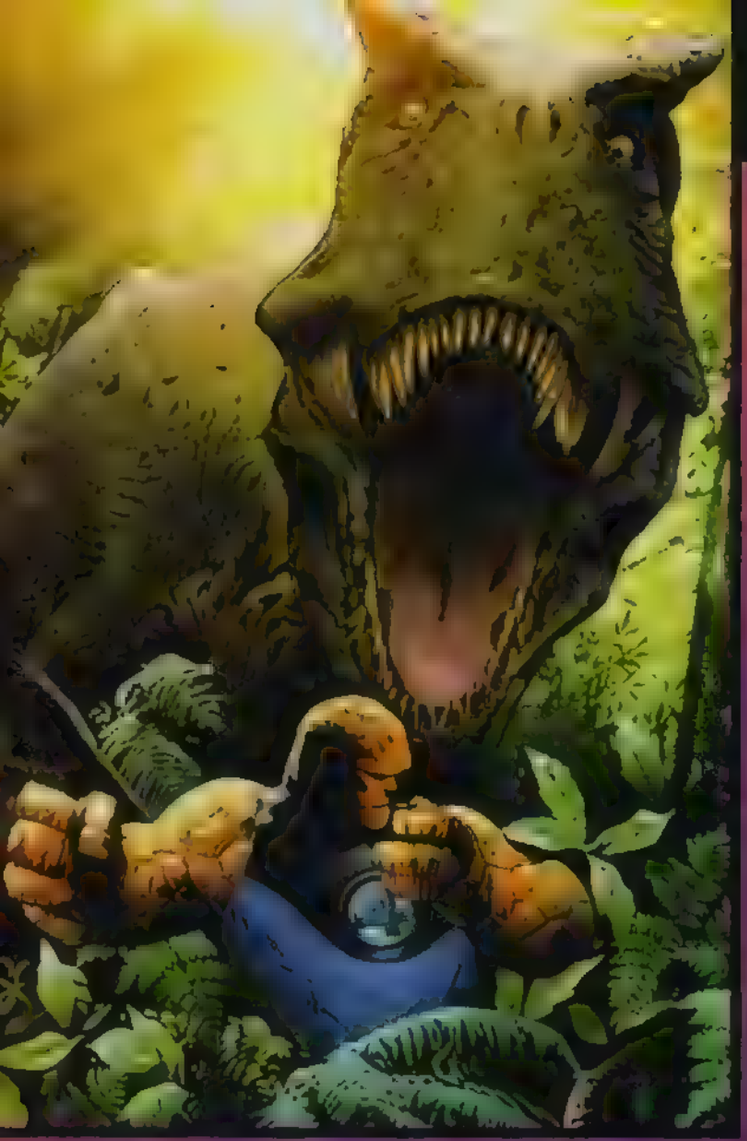
GREG: Yeah, I've got a bachelor in fine arts degree in drawing and painting. You know, I never even considered doing anything else, to be honest with you. I actually never even thought about if I was going to be able to make a good career out of it or not. It's just what I did. I've been fortunate with the fact that it has come out to be a good career.

SPOTLIGHT: Speaking of careers, what made you try and make a break into the comic world?

GREG: During my junior year I started working for a screen print company. Upon graduating college, I continued to do that, and I was in that business for ten years. I was approaching thirty years old, and I thought if I was ever going to do comics, I'd better get around to it. It was always something in the back of my mind that was something I'd want to do, but as things moved along I got involved in the screen printing and doing some different types of artwork, like airbrushing on cars, because I'm a big car guy also. So things kinda got away from me in terms of comics as a career, but after seeing the way the screen print business was going…you know, working for a smaller family owned company, realizing that was never gonna lead anywhere, after ten years I finally came to that conclusion. That is what finally motivated me to put together a comic book portfolio and start going to a couple conventions and try to break into the business.

SPOTLIGHT: Being from Terra Haute, I guess you went to the big Chicago convention?

GREG: Yeah, the first one I went to was one of the small ones at the Holiday Inn in Indianapolis. I met a couple guys that were doing some small self-publishing stuff out of Cincinnati, and they liked what I had, and I actually started doing some indie stuff with those guys. Later that year, I went to the Mid-Ohio Con in Columbus and met some other guys that were actually publishing a project, and so I started doing some pencil work for them. At the time, they were called Sky Comics. I did two issues of a book called *Storm Quest*, and then the next summer, I took those samples up to Chicago, and that's actually where I got my first work with DC Comics.



SAVAGE BREATH IN THE SAVAGE LAND! Greg's first page of art in Ultimate FF is this super-cool depiction of Ben Grimm facing down a towering Tyrannosaur! (from *Ultimate FF #21.*)

SPOTLIGHT: How do you feel about your work on *Storm Quest* now? Do you feel it holds up pretty well?

GREG: Oh, it's pretty bad. But fortunately somebody saw something in it to recognize that there was some potential there to develop down the road.

SPOTLIGHT: It was good enough to get you a job at DC!

GREG: Yeah, I was very fortunate to get that.

SPOTLIGHT: Did you role model after anyone at that time in the industry?

GREG: Well, if you look at that stuff, you can see all the Image crosshatching that I was trying to go after.

SPOTLIGHT: Was that a good fit for you, or did you feel you needed to evolve out of that?

GREG: I had to find a starting point, something that would be contemporary in terms that would get me noticed by someone. And I was pretty much into that type of thing, a lot of the crosshatching and all that. So it was a good starting point, but as times progressed, I've gotten closer to my roots of drawing, which has always been a more realistic approach.

SPOTLIGHT: What kind of development did you go through at DC? You did a lot of the Bat-books at the time, like *Nightwing* and *Birds of Prey*.

GREG: I'm never really satisfied with my work. I'm always trying to make it better, to push myself and not be complacent with anything. That's why my work always has a slight evolution to it from year to year.

SPOTLIGHT: Shortly after DC, you moved over to CrossGen, a move that is pretty safe to say was one that led you to your biggest renown on a title called *Sojourn*. Did you feel this was going to be a good fit for you?

GREG: I saw CrossGen as an opportunity, something that could lead somewhere.

SPOTLIGHT: A good risk, perhaps, because you hadn't really gotten a big profile out of your work at DC.

GREG: I mean, the job offer was good, and sometimes you have to take a chance on things. My wife and I had always enjoyed vacationing down in Florida, and we had talked about someday moving down there anyways, and we had just had a child. When we moved down to Florida, she was just about one and a half, and so I thought it was a good time to try something new, since she was so young and wasn't in school at that point. I saw a lot of opportunity and potential with CrossGen and the challenge of starting a new project like that from scratch was appealing as well.

SPOTLIGHT: Your tenure at CrossGen was marked by a very long run on Sojourn.

GREG: Yeah, I was on there for something like thirty issues.

SPOTLIGHT: Can you comment on how you worked then, especially with the more traditional coloring and inking, compared to what you're doing now with Marvel?

GREG: Once again, it's an evolution. I wanted to keep pushing things, and things started to slowly get towards a more realistic and naturalistic feeling, yet still keeping a kind of energy to it; not a static quality.

SPOTLIGHT: Obviously, the quality of the stuff you did then can be pinned on the studio environment that was unique to Cross Gen. What did you make of the way they involved all levels of a book's creation in that particular environment?

GREG: It was nice to be involved in some of the storylines, in some of the type of characters that we ended up using. The book ended up having some monsters in it, and I thought that was a result of me being able to talk to Ron Marz and him being a monster fan as well, it made it easy to do that kind of stuff.

SPOTLIGHT: Do you miss *Sojourn*?

GREG: No, not really. I enjoyed the project, I enjoyed the characters that we created for it, but I mean, that question... *(Pause.)* Yeah, I miss *Sojourn*, because I enjoyed doing the book, but I definitely don't miss the whole CrossGen thing.

SPOTLIGHT: That went sour towards the end, huh?

GREG: Yeah, that went bad fast.

SPOTLIGHT: That's too bad. It was a nice idea, and everyone I've talked to that is a CrossGen vet- Jim Cheung, Steve McNiven- they all agree, "Boy it was great for a while."

GREG: Yeah, potentially it could have been a great thing. That's part of the reason why we took the chance on joining the company.

SPOTLIGHT: Was Arwyn from *Sojourn* referenced after anyone in particular?

GREG: She's a combination of a lot of different looks. I collect all the fashion magazines that come through the mail. I get magazines and clip stuff out in newspapers and whatnot. She's not like one specific person. I have this certain look that I like to go for with women's lips and eyes, and it's an amalgamation of all these things that I see. I may use something out of a magazine that really doesn't look like her, but I like the pose, based on the way the lighting is, and then I'll adjust the lips and eyes to get to that certain look. Some people have told me that my wife has a certain kind of quality that looks like that a little bit, in terms of her lips or her eyes.

SPOTLIGHT: And that manifests itself in your style?

GREG: I suppose it does. Obviously I was attracted to her for some reason, and since that's the way I like to draw those specific facial features, I guess it does kinda reflect back to her.

SPOTLIGHT: I assume she would be flattered by that?

GREG: Maybe...I don't know! *(Laughter.)*

SPOTLIGHT: So after you left CrossGen, how quick a journey was it to Marvel?

GREG: That whole thing that was going on, I had been contacted by Marvel and some of the other companies, they wanted to feel me out to see what my situation was, and I tried to stay with CrossGen as long as I could, but when I finally did resign, they went under a month or so afterwards. It was pretty obvious that the thing was hemorrhaging about as bad as it could be. For the sake of my family, I had to resign from there. People weren't getting paid, and we had gone through that a while before, and I said I wasn't going to go through that again, to put my family in jeopardy. That's what forced the decision there.

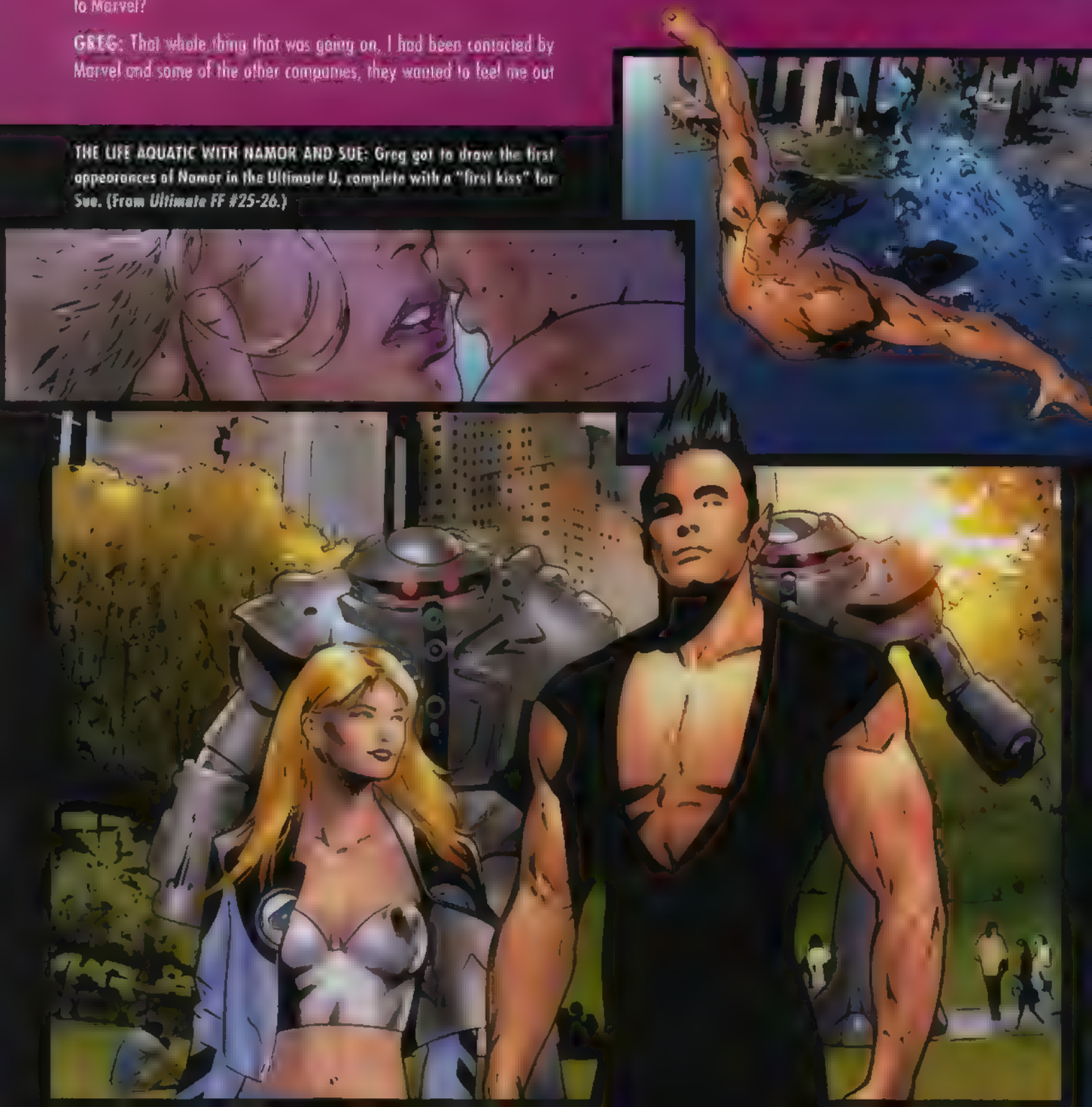
And then, after all that while, we'd been given the right to do freelance [redacted] weren't getting paid.

SPOTLIGHT: Well, that's one good thing, they did.

GREG: Yeah. I mean you gotta make a living. So I started doing covers for Marvel, DC and Top Cow.

SPOTLIGHT: When your time at CrossGen was up, you could have gone to anyone, but we're glad you came to Marvel! What was it about Marvel that appealed to you so much?

INTERVIEW CONTINUES ON THIRD PAGE FOLLOWING



THE LIFE AQUATIC WITH NAMOR AND SUE: Greg got to draw the first appearances of Namor in the Ultimate U, complete with a "first kiss" for Sue. (From *Ultimate FF #25-26.*)

MONSTE

If it's one thing Greg Land likes besides cars and drawing comics, it's monsters. If it bumps around in the night and it's got claws, fangs, fur or scales, he gets a kick out of it! Before Spotlight talked monsters with Greg, we asked him to list his favorite monster movies of all time. See how his list compares to yours!

1) Wolfman

2) Frankenstein Meets Wolfman

3) House of Frankenstein

4) Creature From the Black Lagoon

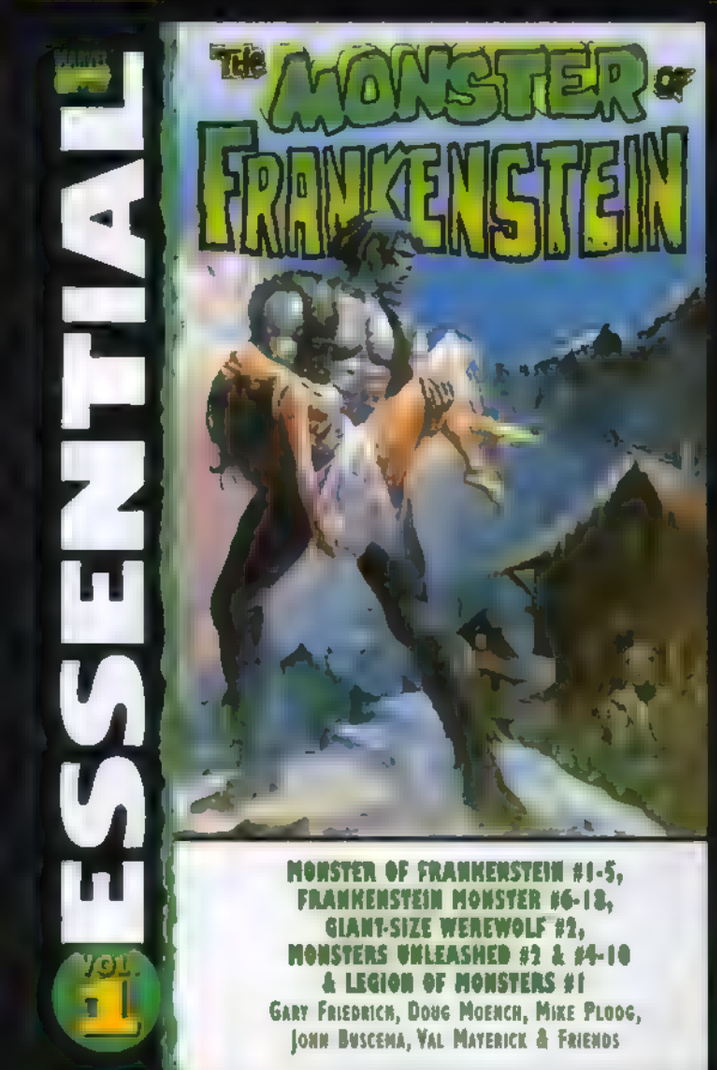
SPOTLIGHT: So you're a big fan of the old Universal monster movies. What's so great about them?

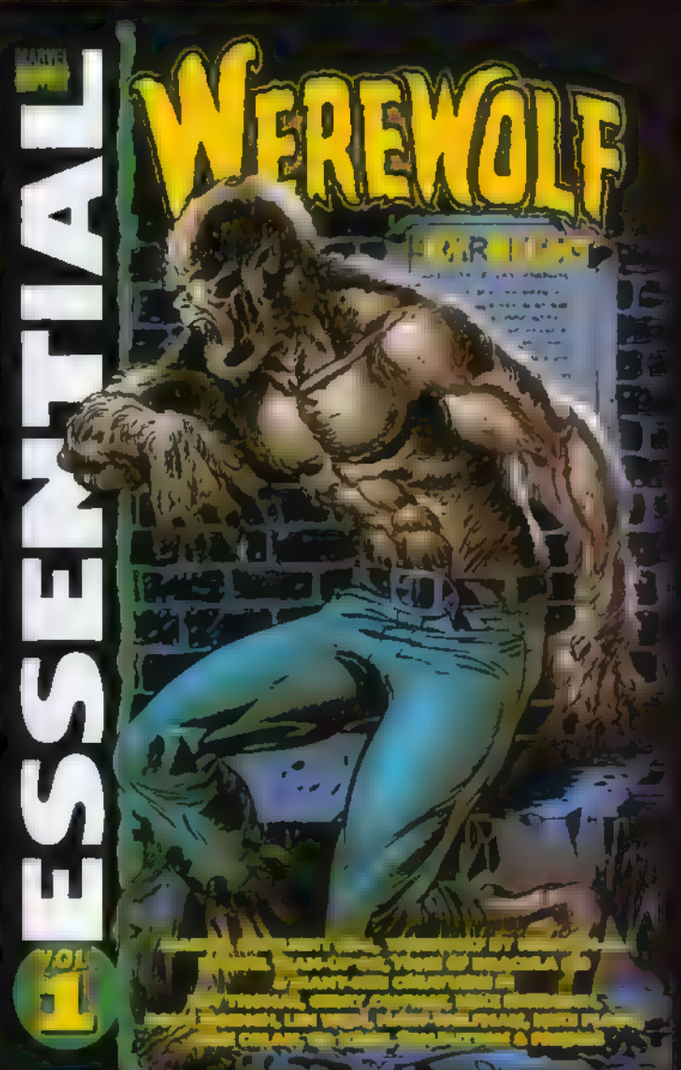
GREG: There was just something about them, maybe from the time period when I grew up, in the early 70s, with all the Famous Monsters magazines. We had a show out of Indianapolis called Sammy Terry, he was our area's ghoul host for the late night movies on Friday night. Things like that struck a chord with me.

SPOTLIGHT: Where I grew up, there was a station out of Tampa that had a Saturday afternoon show called Creature Feature, with the host Dr. Paul Bearer. He was this tall, gaunt looking guy, kind of looked like Mastermind from the X-Men comics; talked really slowly with a deep, gravelly voice, and he would introduce monster movies to little kids. That was must see TV every Saturday afternoon! They don't do have shows like that any more.

GREG: No, they don't. That was a fun thing. For me to try and stay up that late was a challenge in the first place, though. I'm kind of a morning person. It's a running joke with me, because I never did get to see the Wolfman until I turned thirty when I could see it on VHS and not at a midnight movie. I'd always fall asleep before the monster would show up.

The covers to *Essential Werewolf By Night* and *Essential Frankenstein*, two books bound to keep you turning the pages at night!





R MASH

WITH GREG LAND

SPOTLIGHT: Were you a fan of the George Romero zombie movies?

GREG: Not as much, but I do remember seeing them at midnight movies, but half the time I'd fall asleep because I was tired. (Laughter.) My wife and I would go see Young Frankenstein at the midnight movie and she'd have to wake me up to go home.

SPOTLIGHT: Oh, man…you're a drag. A woman can't even go out to a good horror movie without you going to sleep! Are you into any of the modern horror movies?

GREG: I really liked Halloween, the first one. I thought that was great. Just the other night, I got to watch Underworld: Evolution, and I enjoyed that quite a bit.

SPOTLIGHT: So I heard a rumor that there is one character above all others that you would like to draw for Marvel. Can you share with us what that would be?

GREG: Werewolf by Night! And you can pass that on to Joe Quesada. I don't know if they have any plans for that down the road, but I'd definitely like to be considered for that.

SPOTLIGHT: They just put out an Essential Werewolf By Night reprinting all those early stories.

GREG: I love all that great Mike Ploog artwork! Yeah, I've got that Essentials volume by my bed. I read that at night.

MORE MONSTERS FROM GREG: Thing vs. Zombie Hulk (from *UFF* #23) and the coming of the Skrulls (from *UFF* #29.)

GREG: I can't [illegible] with Jim Cheung and Sue Rosenberg, myself, Phoenix. I'm the only woman on the creative team and I remember how the [illegible] I'm like, "Oh, my God, I'm working with Jim Cheung and Sue Rosenberg and Phoenix!" I'm like a little kid. I'm like, "Oh, my God, I'm working with Jim Cheung and Sue Rosenberg and Phoenix!" I'm like a little kid. I'm like, "Oh, my God, I'm working with Jim Cheung and Sue Rosenberg and Phoenix!" I'm like a little kid.

SPOTLIGHT: [illegible]

GREG: [illegible] I was a huge fan of the Phoenix saga and the Dark Phoenix saga. I remember reading that

colorist perform, what with the flames bursting out and the diffusion in a lot of your linework. How do you think they did?

GREG: Working with Matt Ryan and Justin Ponsor, they're a penciler's dream to work with. They are so good at what they do and they are such professionals. There are some things that I am not afraid to try, because I know that they will be able to see it through to the end, with the different effects and whatnot.

SPOTLIGHT: What kind of risks do you think you can take with them?

GREG: As time goes on, I've gotten more into the tonal work on these pages. Matt is extremely good at being able to get that onto the page. I actually do the tonal stuff and the lighter pencils, and as he inks the solid black areas and the feathering effect, he'll actually come in over top of my gradations with a prisma-color, like a 90% gray, and add over top of the rendering that I've done so that we get those blacks coming out of the dark areas and getting those nice gradations going on.

SPOTLIGHT: That sounds like heavy lifting for him. Pretty intense, more than just a straight up ink job.

GREG: I'm not sure time wise how it goes for him; if he'd be able to do it quicker if I did just hatch work or crosshatch work, but he handles it really well, and we get a nice effect that way.

SPOTLIGHT: Certainly if you did it differently it wouldn't come out

[redacted]

series that stood out to you?

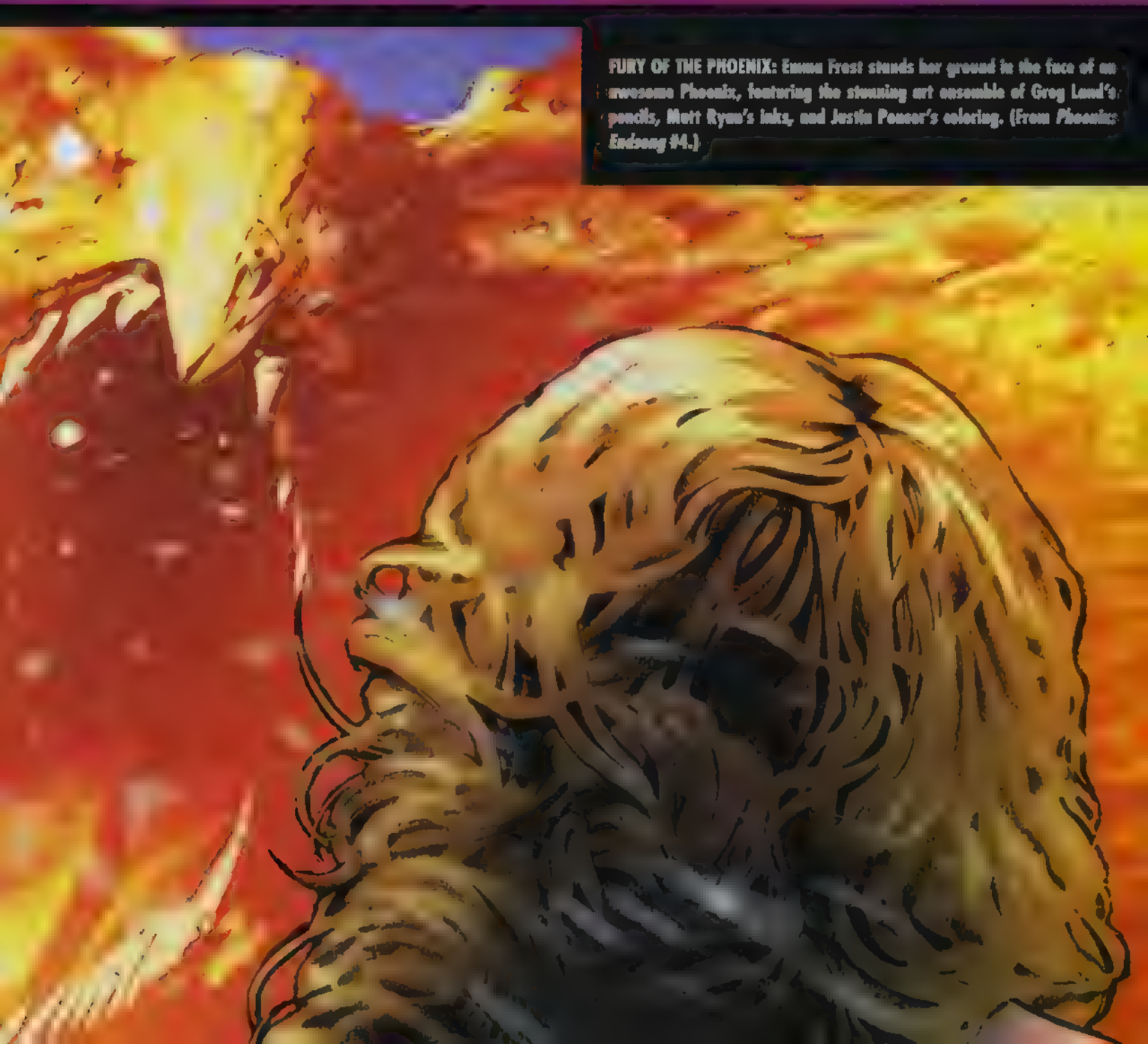
GREG: Yeah. I like the sequence where it's the multiple panel page where Wolverine is killing Jean time and time again. I know that was written a little bit differently, and I just had that idea of the quick cut look to it, and so I thought that one came out fairly well.

SPOTLIGHT: Yeah, it's so dramatic, Jean keeps coming back, and Wolverine is forced to reckon with her. They did something similar in the new X-Men movie. You seen it?

GREG: Yeah.

SPOTLIGHT: Sadly, Wolverine had to take care of her there too. That's an intense scene, that's for sure. The one page that concluded your sequence, you broke it down into a lot of smaller panels. That's something we don't often see from you.

GREG: Yeah, I wanted to do more of a quick action thing where you only see bits and pieces. What he's doing is a horrible thing, he doesn't want to do it, but he has to, but by giving you little quick snippets of it, I think it portrayed the tragedy of it better than just giving you one or two big shots of actually showing the dastardly deed itself. This way, it almost gives it a little bit more of the imagination. It takes away a little bit, just by seeing the smaller parts of what actually happened.



FURY OF THE PHOENIX: Emma Frost stands her ground in the face of an awesome Phoenix, featuring the stunning art ensemble of Greg Land's pencils, Matt Ryan's inks, and Justin Ponsor's coloring. (From *Phoenix: Endsong* #4.)

SPOTLIGHT: Of course, as awful as that sequence is, you have the very nice two-page splash at the end, where you reunited all the characters from the eras of the X-Men in the one spread. That came out very touching and sweet. Some of the drawings hearken back to the 60s era. Did you draw those?

GREG: The original drawings were sent to me. Those were the actual panels they wanted to use, so I basically redrew them on an overlay. I think one of them I kinda just made up, and I drew it in the same type of style, from the same comic book era that they were looking for. Most of them are taken directly from an actual comic from back then.

ULTIMATE FANTASTIC FOUR AND THE MARVEL ZOMBIES

SPOTLIGHT: You started your run on *Ultimate Fantastic Four* with issue #21, which was also Mark Millar's return to the book that he helped launch. We know you like to draw monsters, and your very first image in the comic is of a huge dinosaur!

GREG: Yeah, I had always loved dinosaurs when I was a kid. I love that stuff.

SPOTLIGHT: The layouts you put together in that very first sequence were very evocative, showing the desolate landscape of the Savage Land as the rain falls.

GREG: I think that's what they oughta do with the next X-Men movie, if they do another one: place it in the Savage Land. Wolverine going at it with a pack of raptors? It wouldn't get any better than that.

SPOTLIGHT: As much as I have enjoyed the first three movies, it would be nice to see them break away from the reality they've established, maybe get into outer space or something.

GREG: If they do one more movie where Magneto is talking about mutants vs. humans... I can't take any more of that.

SPOTLIGHT: They could do something like *Days of Future Past*, which was alluded to in the third movie, and I didn't think of Savage Land like you did, but that would be great, too.

GREG: Oh, they could definitely do that. It would be like X-Men meets Jurassic Park.

SPOTLIGHT: You had the honor of giving us our first taste of the so-called Marvel Zombies, the alternate Earth where all super heroes somehow became flesh-eating zombies. Part of this meant you got to do all the group shots of the super hero zombies, racing through the city avenues looking for their next meal. And Mark Millar didn't really tell you, "I want this character, this character, this character in the background." He sort of left it up to you, right?

GREG: Yes, and I enjoyed doing that. And he would just put directions like "Giant-Man" in the script, so I had the freedom to use one of my favorite Giant-Man costumes. I tried to incorporate as many of the 70's super-heroes as I could.

SPOTLIGHT: Hellcat is one of my favorites and you had her up front in one panel!

GREG: Yeah. I went through some of my collection to find what characters I liked and tried to incorporate as many of them as I could.

SPOTLIGHT: Did you run into any peculiarities on down the line? I noticed Iron Man was a zombie, which was confusing to a lot of people. Iron Man is definitely a super-hero, yes, but underneath the armor, he's Tony Stark, a guy who doesn't have any super powers.

DAWN OF THE DEAD: The first appearance of the "Marvel Zombies", in *Ultimate FF #21*.

GREG: Obviously I don't know how he gotten bitten or whatever to become a zombie, but it's a little ironic that the guy clad in armor would get zombiefied. If you take different movies about zombies, you look at the different ways to get infected, he could have gotten a drop of blood in his eyes.

SPOTLIGHT: The first big issue featuring the zombies, *Ultimate Fantastic Four #22*, had that big double-splash page with the zombies getting a whole lot worth of cars being dumped on their heads by Magneto. How did you approach that page?

GREG: When I read the script for the first time, I thought, "Oh that's cool." And then I was like, "Oh crap, now I gotta draw this!" I'm a big car guy, though, so I've got a lot of car reference: hot rod magazines and that kind of stuff. It was something that I knew I wanted to make come to life on the page, to make it look stunning.

SPOTLIGHT: When you look close at the artwork, it's obviously a comic art drawing, but if you move the page back and look from a distance, the photorealism really takes over. How do you achieve that?

GREG: I will actually take different photos and make copies and cut and paste, which is an old school way of doing things, so I'll make this big montage on my scrap piece of paper, and then I'll actually move these photocopies around so I get all the size relationships and the design the way I want it to be. Then I'll make a copy of that and then put my good drawing paper over the top and then start drawing from that. That way I can make the composition flow throughout the whole thing. That's achieved by being able to move things around. As I'm actually drawing it on the page, and I'm not limited to what I had underneath, I can take my page and still move it around to make sure my composition in the end turns out the way it should. Some of the cars that I used in there, a couple of them are my own cars.

SPOTLIGHT: Are you a car collector?

GREG: No, I'm not a collector, but I do have two classic cars. I've got a '55 Chevy, which was the first car I ever had in high school, and I've got a '61 Corvette.

SPOTLIGHT: Is either one of them your favorite?

GREG: Well, I love them both equally, but the '55 holds a very special place to me. It was my first car, and I took my wife on our first date in it.

SPOTLIGHT: Do you work on your cars?

GREG: A little bit, but not that much. Nowadays I don't have time to do much of anything past work and being a dad. *(Laughter.)* I'm gonna restore the '55 again one of these days, hopefully later this summer. And the Corvette is up and in running shape.

WALKING THROUGH A WASTED LAND: *Below,* Reed Richards surveys the strange new world of Marvel Zombies, from *UFF #21. Left,* Greg's first panel featuring the full onslaught of Zombies, from *UFF #22.*

SPOTLIGHT: [illegible]

GREG: [illegible]

SPOTLIGHT: [illegible]

GREG: [illegible]

SPOTLIGHT: [illegible]

GREG: [illegible]

SPOTLIGHT: [illegible]

GREG: [illegible]

SPOTLIGHT: [illegible]

GREG: [illegible]

SPOTLIGHT: [illegible]

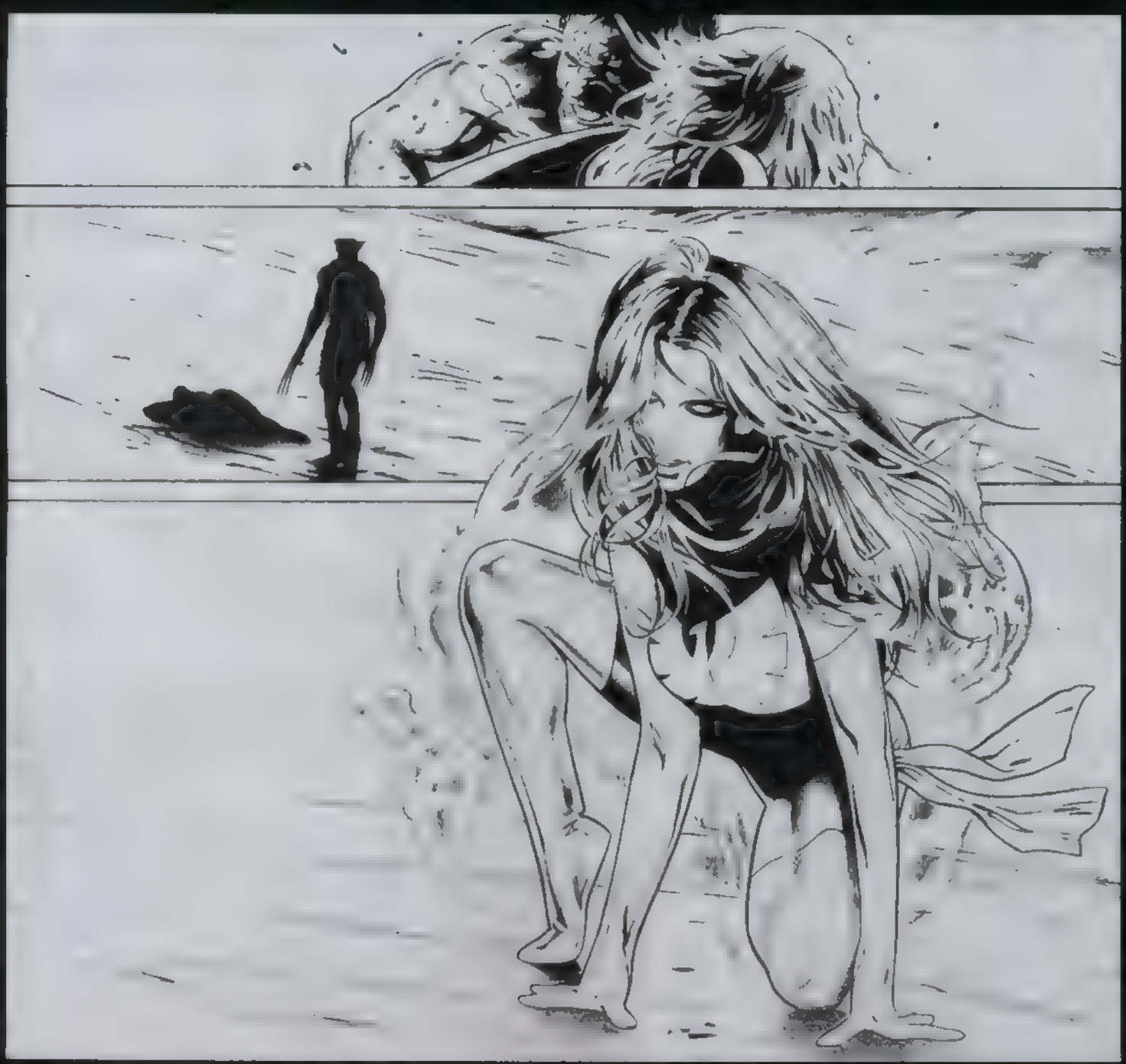
GREG: [illegible]

SPOTLIGHT: [illegible]

GREG: [illegible]

SPOTLIGHT: [illegible]

PHOENIX: ENDSONG #3, PAGE 19: Original black and white pencil art by Greg Land, from one of Greg's favorite sequences in the mini-series.



PHOENIX: ENDSONG #3, PAGE 20: Original black and white pencil art by Greg Land.

ULTIMATE POWER #1, PAGE 2: Original black and white pencil art by Greg Land from the upcoming series *Ultimate Power*.

BULLPEN BULLETINS

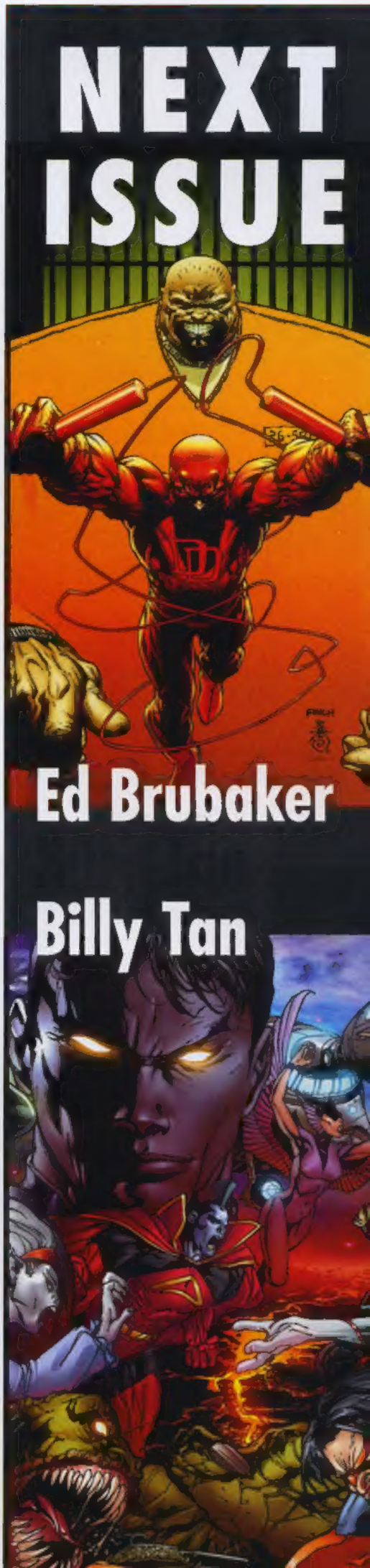
ITEM! The second and final volume of BLACK PANTHER BY JACK KIRBY is now out on comic store stands near you! This collection reprints issues #8-13 of the 70s era stories of T'Challa, written and drawn by Jack "The King" Kirby. Fans who think they know the Black Panther should check these stories out, featuring what longtime BP scribe Christopher Priest called "Happy Pants Black Panther." The stories are briskly told in Kirby's nutty late 70s super-hero style, with a lot of splendorous splash pages and two-page spreads to keep you feasting on the eye candy! This will make perfect reading while you're waiting for the King of Wakanda to walk down the aisle with everyone's favorite mutant storm goddess, so snap it up while there are still copies left!

ITEM! Blade fans have got it good with a brand-new TV show on Spike TV and a new comic book that premieres in September! Written by up-and-coming new talent Marc Guggenheim *(Wolverine)* and drawn by legendary veteran Howard Chaykin *(American Flagg)*, this series starts with a self-contained story that will fill you in on all things Blade! Howard Chaykin drawing dark and mysterious vampire hunter stories? I'll see you there!

ITEM! Here's a message to fans of *Marvel Civil War*: come July, you'll want to come in from the edge of your seats and spend a little downtime with some collected editions that will help add weight to the histories and backgrounds of the big event's main players. First is CAPTAIN AMERICA MASTERWORKS VOL. 3, a 288-page, full color hardcover that reprints Captain America #101-113, with art by Jack Kirby and Jim Steranko! In these stories, Cap isn't taking on Iron Man! No, he's battling it out with baddies like the Red Skull and Hydra! It's shield-slinging suspense the way you like it! And for you Iron Man fans, check out IRON MAN: EXTREMIS, a Premiere Edition hardcover that reprints the first six issues of Warren Ellis' and Adi Granov's startlingly fresh take on ol' Shellhead. In all honesty, this series had some well-known scheduling issues that may have kept you on the sidelines the first time around, but no more! Ellis' taut tale of industrial intrigue is set against Adi Granov's unmistakable artwork, all collected in one place for your reading pleasure! Whose side are you on? With Iron Man and Cap collected editions, there's no bad side, so choose them both!

ITEM! Hey kids! It's correction time! Last month's issue of *Marvel Spotlight* somehow missed out on crediting the photo of Neil Gaiman in his handbook section to the compelling camerawork of Sophia Quach. We also failed to credit the photo of Future Bible Heroes to the phenomenal photography of Gail O'Hara. And finally, we somehow omitted the credit to the photo of Spider-Man scrapping in Times Square with the Vulture to the stupendous shutter-bugging of Peter Parker. Now that we're all out of awesome alliterations, it's time to get ready for next month's corrections!

To find Marvel Comics at a local comic shop, call 1-888-COMICBOOK or visit marvel.com



ULTIMATE X-MEN
KIRKMAN • RANEY
2006

ULTIMATE POWER
LAND • BENDIS •
STRACZYNSKI • LOEB
FALL 2006